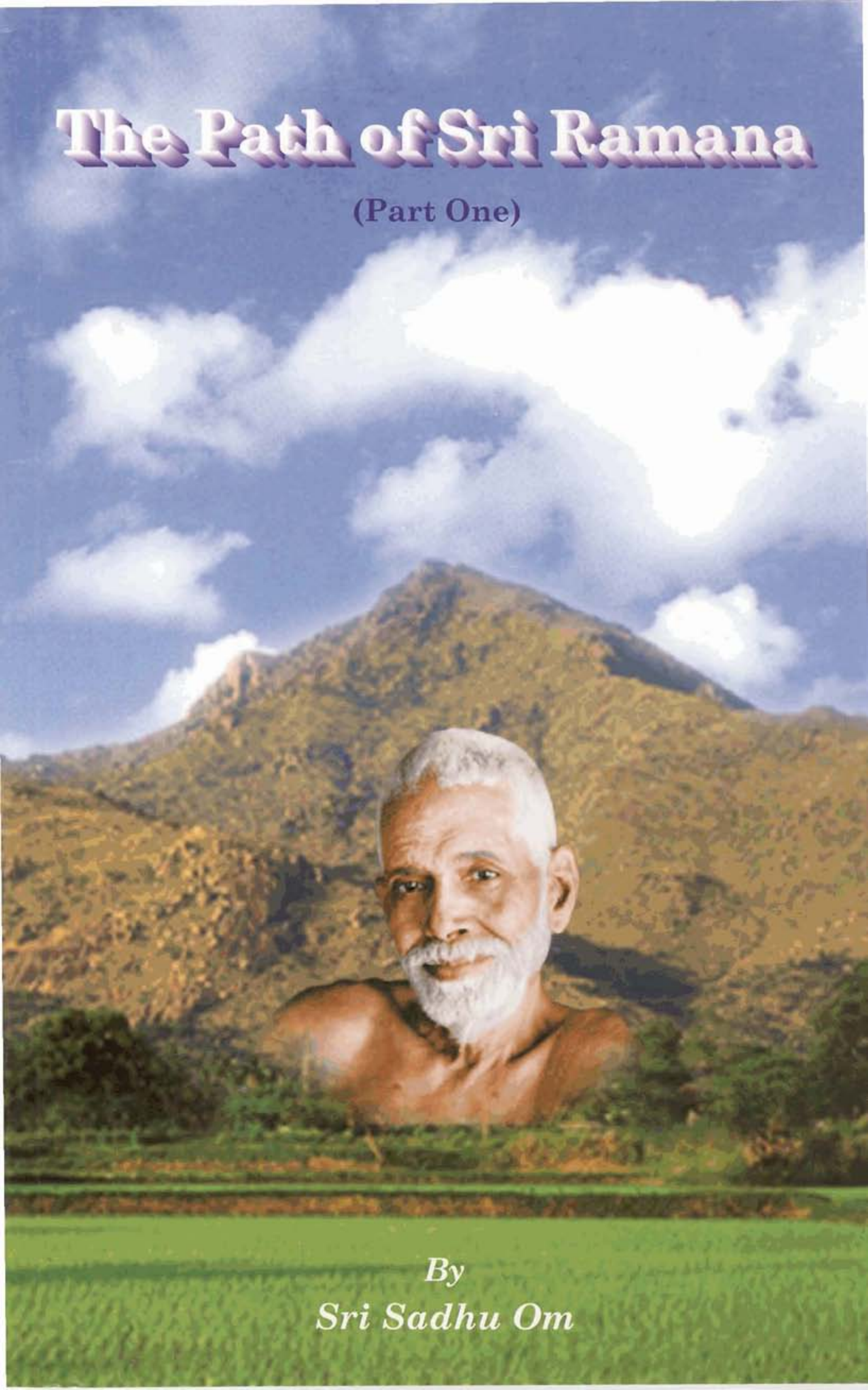
The Path of Sri Ramana

(Part One)



By

Sri Sadhu Om

The Path of Sri Ramana

PART ONE

The Jñana aspect of the teaching

By

Sri Sadhu Om

An exposition of the path of self-enquiry as taught by Bhagavan Sri Ramana with a Brief Life History of Sri Ramana and an English translation of *Nan Yar?*

Sri Ramana Kshetra
(Kanvashrama Trust)
TIRUVANNAMALAI
INDIA

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This e-book is available for free download from:

www.sageramana.org

Publisher's Note

(To Fourth Edition)

We should not be astonished that *"The Path of Sri Ramana"* needs a fourth printing in a relatively short time.

Readers find and describe this book as "precise and useful", the "Do it yourself" manual for doing one's duty : to Be . . . happy. On one occasion Bhagavan Sri Ramana is reported to have said – on the subject of *sadhana* – That it cannot be done : the ego cannot want Liberation (its own disappearance) and the Self needs neither the ego nor "sadhana". What remains to be done is to let Self do the *sadhana.* How? By relaxing, by "doing nothing". How? By submitting, which is devotion. How? By knowing how? That's what this book gives : new clues, most valuable insights. These have been enlarged upon, from the *bhakti* approach as also for those wondering what to do with all this in our day-to-day life. Those two separate parts will soon see the English translation, also by Sri Michael James, now an author in his own right, and our trustee.

Have a nice "suicide", or rather "ego-cide".

R.E. Hamsananandan (J.J. de Reede)
President , KANVASHRAMA TRUST

Mahasivaratri, 23.2.'90
"Mounalayam"
Sri Ramanasramam P.O.
Tiruvannamalai-606 603.

A Fifth Edition

Most cultures teach about the SIX SACRED ARTS: – Sculpture, Painting, Dance, Music, Recitation, Architecture as leading to the Seventh Art: to Be Self.

Here is Sad-Guru Ramana's Short-cut.

R.E. Hamsanananda (J.J. de Reede)
President , KANVASHRAMA TRUST

Publisher's Note

Sixth Edition

We are very happy to bring forth this newly typesetted sixth edition of "The Path of Sri Ramana" - Part One - by Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal; now for the first time with a new cover design, much the same as the Tamil Edition "Sri Ramana Vazhi". The text and structure of the contents remains unchanged as in the previous fifth edition.

We are very grateful to the members of - Sri Arunachala Ramana Trust - for their precious collaboration of seeing through the press and the proofs reading of this work. Many thanks!

Last but not least our humble thanks to the late Sri Hamsanandanji (Mr. J.J. De Reede) our Founder-President, who expired on 28.01.2000, who has given us the means, the love and the inspiration to continue this service for the seekers on the Path of Sri Ramana..... Thank you!

Bhagavan's Aradhana Day
6th May 2005

Skanda Bhakta C. Rossi
Kanvashrama Trust

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Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Arunachalaramanaya

Preface to the Fourth Edition

Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has taught two principal paths for the attainment of Self-knowledge, which is the state of eternal, perfect and unalloyed happiness. The first path He taught is the path of Self-enquiry, 'Who am I?', which is the path of knowledge or *jnana,* while the second path is the path of self-surrender, which is 'the path of love or *bhakti.* This book, *The Path of Sri Ramana–Part One,* is an exposition of the path of Self-enquiry, while the path of self-surrender is expounded in the *The Path of Sri Ramana–Part Two.*

How this book came into existence is briefly as follows: After Bhagavan Sri Ramana cast off His mortal body in 1950, many of His devotees from both India and abroad gradually came to recognize Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal, the author of this book, not only as one of the foremost disciples of Sri Bhagavan, but also as a person endowed with a rare gift to elucidate His teachings in a clear and simple manner which could easily be understood and followed in practice by all seekers of true knowledge. Thus many devotees used to approach Sri Swamigal seeking clarification from him about all aspects of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, especially about the method of practising Self-enquiry. Finding the lucid explanations given by

Sri Swamigal in answer to their various questions to be of great help in their spiritual practice, some devotees used to make notes of the replies he gave orally, while others used to collect and preserve the letters which he wrote to them in answer to their doubts.

Knowing how useful the explanations given by Sri Swamigal would be to all sincere seekers of truth, one of the devotees of Sri Bhagavan, the late Dr R. Santanam, took great pains over several years to gather together many of the letters written by Sri Swamigal and many of the notes taken by those who had visited him, and requested Sri Swamigal to edit all the letters and notes into the form of a book. Since the material thus gathered by Dr Santanam consisted of replies which were given under various different circumstances to devotees who were on various different levels of understanding, and which were dealing with various diverse subjects such as devotion, Self-enquiry, *yoga*, *karma*, God, world, soul, birth, death, liberation and so on, Sri Swamigal felt it would not be appropriate to form a book consisting of so many miscellaneous ideas, and hence he selected only those ideas which were centered around the direct path of Self-enquiry and edited them in such a manner that their ideas would flow in a coherent sequence. What he thus edited was published by Dr Santanam in 1967 in Tamil under the title *Sri Ramana Vazhi* (The Path of Sri Ramana), Part One. Later, at the request of many devotees who did not know Tamil, an English version of Part One was published in 1971.

When Part One of *The Path of Sri Ramana* in both Tamil and English began to reach the hands of many devotees of Sri Bhagavan living in various corners of the world, some of them began to ask Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal,

"Why does this book deal only with the direct path of Self-enquiry? Why have you not written about the path of self-surrender and various other aspects of Sri Bhagvan's teachings, such as the truth He has revealed about the nature of God, world, creation, *karma* and so on?" Therefore Sri Swamigal once again took up the material gathered by Dr Santanam, and from the various replies which he had set aside while editing Part One, he compiled Part Two, consisting of three chapters namely (1) 'God and the World', (2) 'Love or *Bhakti*', and (3) '*Karma*', followed by a number of explanatory appendices. Part Two was first published in English in 1976, and though it is now out of print, it is hoped that a new edition will later be brought out after the translation has been thoroughly revised.

While replying to the questions on spiritual practice put to him by Tamilians, Sri Swamigal sometimes used to reply by writing verses and songs, which Dr Santanam gathered together under the title *Sadhanai Saram* (The Essence of Spiritual Practice). In 1983 *Sadhanai Saram* was published in Tamil as the third part of *Sri Ramana Vazhi*. English translations of some of the verses from *Sadhanai Saram* are included in this book as Appendix One.

In 1984-85, when the third Tamil edition of *Sri Ramana Vazhi* (parts One and Two) was being printed, Sri Swamigal revised both parts, adding many fresh explanations which he had given in reply to questions raised by devotees who had read the earlier editions in Tamil and English. Many of the new explanations added in the third Tamil edition of Part One and Two, and many of the verses in *Sadhanai Saram*, are yet to be translated into English, but if it is the will of Sri Bhagavan a complete English translation of all three parts of *The Path of Sri Ramana* will later be published.

This present fourth English edition of *The Path of Sri Ramana-Part One* is substantially the same as the second edition, which was published in India in 1981 and reprinted as a third edition in U.S.A. in 1988. The only portion newly added in this fourth edition is Appendix Three, 'Sadhana and Work', which was published as an article in *The Mountain Path,* January 1984 issue, and which many devotees have found to be of great help for applying the practice of Sri Bhagavan's teachings in their day-to-day life.

The author of this book, Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal, developed a deep yearning for spiritual knowledge even in his early childhood, and that yearning began to express itself in his fourteenth year in the form of a copious flow of Tamil verses and songs. In due course in his early twenties his spiritual yearning naturally drew him to the Feet of his *Sadguru,* Bhagavan Sri Ramana. Though his outward contact with Sri Bhagavan lasted barely four years (from July 1946 till April 1950), on account of his one-pointed and unshakable devotion to Sri Bhagavan, his sincere and steadfast adherence to the practice of His teachings, and his total self-effacement, he soon became a fit vessel to receive the Grace of Sri Bhagavan in fullest measure and to attain thereby firm and steady abidance in the state of Self-knowledge.

Though the time a disciple has spent in the physical presence of his *Sadguru* is not a criterion by which one can judge his spiritual attainment, some people used to gauge the worth of each devotee of Sri Bhagavan by the number of years they had lived with Him. When one such person once asked Sri Swamigal in a slightly disparaging manner, "You lived with Sri Ramana for only five years; are there not many who lived with Him for many more years than you

did?" he replied, "Yes, I am indeed ashamed about it, because when even five seconds were more than sufficient for the divine Power shining in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan to quench the spiritual thirst of mature souls, if five years were necessary in my case, does it not show my state of immaturity?".

This reply was typical of the unassuming and self-effacing attitude of Sri Swamigal. In spite of his versatile genius as a Tamil poet of surpassing excellence, a talented musician, a melodious and sweet-voiced singer, a lucid writer of prose, and a brilliant philosopher endowed with a deep spiritual insight and a power of expressing the truth in a clear, simple and original manner, he never sought for himself any recognition or appreciation from the world. In fact, his life was a perfect example of strict adherence to the principal precept taught by Sri Bhagavan, namely that we should deny our-self at every moment of life by giving no importance to our own individual entity, and should thus completely erase our ego.

Though some of Sri Swamigal's writings in both prose and poetry were published during his lifetime, and though many more have been published in Tamil after he shed his physical body in March 1985, his attitude towards the publication of his writings was quite different from the attitude of many other writers of spiritual or philosophical books, who of their own accord seek to share their knowledge with the world by writing and publishing books. 'We should not open the door unless it is knocked' was the principle underlying all his acts. Unless he was questioned with sincere earnestness, he would not speak or write anything about spiritual matters. Rising and going outwards to teach the world, getting on platforms to deliver lectures,

seeking to enlighten the world by writing voluminous books, founding institutions, propagating religious doctrines by publishing magazines – all such activities he used strictly to avoid. And in doing so, he was but following the path lived and exemplified by Bhagavan Sri Ramana.

Sri Swamigal often used to say, "We should not run after the world; we should not look outwards at the world, we should look inwards at Self. Those *sannyasis* who run after the world achieve neither the world nor Self (God). If we try to chase after our shadow, we will never catch it; but if we go towards the sun, our shadow will automatically come running behind us. Those *sannyasis* who are always attending to the world with the aim of teaching the world became spoilt in the end. . . No Sage *(jnani)* who ever came on earth was the product of an *ashramam, math* or any such institution. Each one of them stood alone and realized the Truth by himself. There is no rule that a man can attain true knowledge *(jnana)* only by becoming an inmate of a religious institution. Therefore, in the name of service to the world, let no one cheat himself and retard his spiritual progress by forming foundations and associations and by preaching, shouting slogans and running magazines".

An invitation once came to Sri Swamigal from an earnest seeker in U.S.A., "Will you not come to the West and guide us?" His attitude is shown clearly in his reply, which ran as follows: ". . .It is therefore unnecessary for the Reality to run after the world. Moreover, according to the great truth discovered and revealed by Sri Ramana Bhagavan, a good person leading a simple yet highly spiritual life and passing away unknown to the world does far greater good to the world than all the political and social reformers and all the platform-heroes of philosophy. A truly

enlightened life will surely help earnest seekers even though they may be living in a remote corner of the world and even without any physical contact, communications, magazines or writings. This is Sri Ramana Bhagavan's method of teaching the world through speech-transcending Mystic Silence, the greatest Power. Is it not up to us to follow the footsteps of our Guru, Sri Ramana'?... So why should I think of going anywhere? As He who has guided me to His home is the Father, Lord and inmost Self of one and all, does He not know best how to guide home earnest seekers, wherever they may be? Why then should an ego rise with the thought 'I should guide people'? If such an 'I' were to rise, would it not be a self-conceited attempt to belittle the Grace of Sri Ramana, the one reality? Therefore, the thought of going to the West or the East, or here, there or anywhere else, has never occurred to me and will never occur to me!"

Thus Sri Swamigal stood as an example of how those who wish to follow Sri Bhagavan should conduct their lives. Because of his self-effacing attitude, he was always indifferent to the publication of his writings either in Tamil or in English. When he answered the questions of those who came to him asking him how to practise the path of Self-enquiry, he never expected that his replies would one day become a book. At no time did he ever have the least intention or *sankalpa* that he should write a book.

Not to teach the world, the myth,
Not to gain a mass of wealth,
Not for name and fame that hails,
There a Sage in *samadhi* dwells,
Flock you all and worship Him',
'Tis not for these I sing this hymn;

Only for the great reward,
The death of ego, I pray, my Lord!

- *Sri Ramana Guruvarul Antadi*, verse 68.

Such was Sri Swamigal's prayer to Sri Bhagavan. When aspirants used to ask him questions about spiritual matters Sri Swamigal would sometimes reply, "Since you ask me, I can answer, but only in accordance with the teachings of Sri Bhagavan. Do not expect me to give replies in such a manner as merely to please you. I can tell you only what I have come to know from Sri Bhagavan. If you ask about paths other than Sri Bhagavan's path Self-enquiry, I can also, explain about them, but only in the light of Sri Bhagavan's teachings. His teachings alone are the authoritative *sastras* for me. If the world chooses not to accept my ideas, it does not matter; let it throw them away". Sri Swamigal was never concerned in the least about what others thought of his views, nor about whether or not his ideas would be valued by the world. As regards the books which were published in his name, he once said, "I told whatever I know only for those who asked me. I do not object if they wish to share these ideas with others by printing them in the form of books. But I have not come to the world for writing books. I am not a writer, nor do I have any desire to become a writer. If the world likes to have these ideas, then it is its own responsibility to publish them." Therefore this book is published only by those and for those who appreciate Sri Swamigal's **unswerving adherence** to the clear and direct path shown by Sri Bhagavan.

Sri Bhagavan's teachings can be found expressed with perfect clarity and in an undiluted, unalloyed and definitative manner only in His own original writings such

as *Ulladu Narpadu, Upadesa Undiyar* and *Sri Arunachala Stuti Panchakam*, and in the work *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, in which His oral teachings have been recorded in a faithful and authoritive manner by His foremost disciple, Sri Muruganar. But since all these works are written in a terse and classical style of Tamil poetry, their correct meaning and import cannot be understood even by many educated Tamilians. This is *one* of the main reasons why most of the translations of and commentaries upon these works contain so many incorrect interpretations. Therefore, in order to translate, comment upon or expound Sri Bhagavan's teachings faithfully and accurately, one of the most important qualifications required of a person is that he should have a thorough command over Tamil and should be fully conversant, with all Sri Bhagavan's Tamil works. In this respect Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal was ideally qualified, because not only was he himself a great Tamil poet, but he also had close and direct contact with Sri Bhagavan and a long-standing literary association with Sri Muruganar.

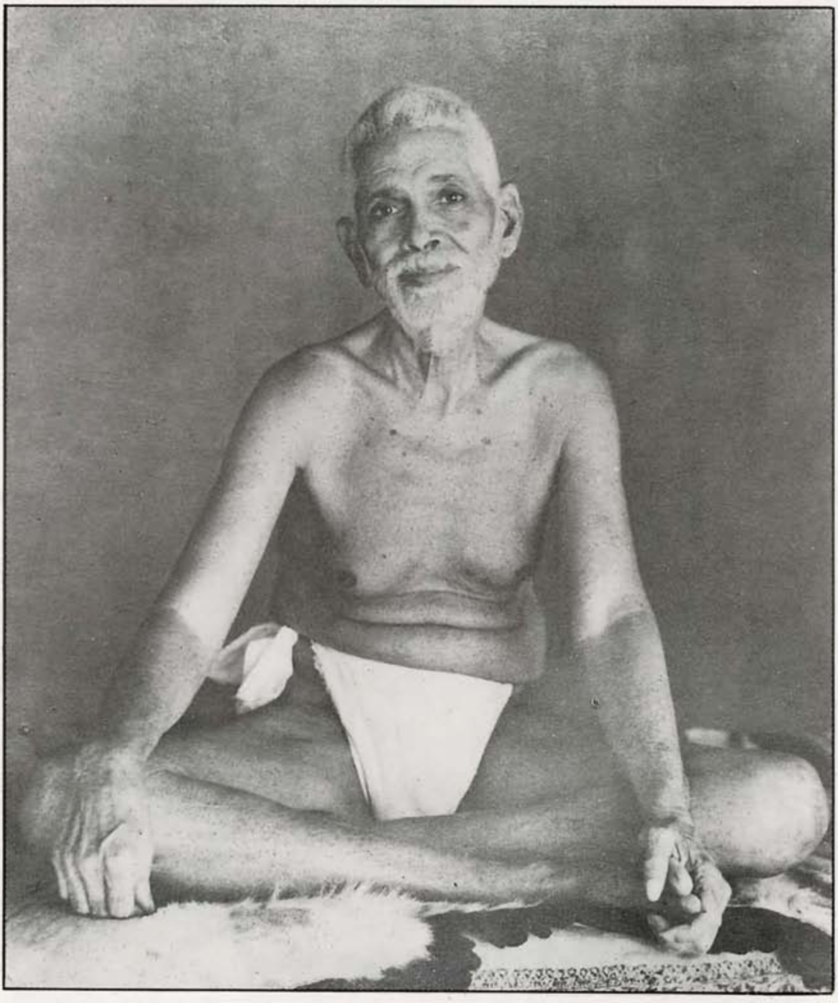
However, mere command over language is not sufficient to enable a person to interpret and expound Sri Bhagavan's teachings faithfully. In order to do full justice to His teachings, a person must have a clear and deep insight into their inner meaning, and such insight can be gained only by one who has sincerely and one-pointedly put His teachings into practice. In this respect also, Sri Sadhu Om Swamigal was ideally qualified. When we read this book, we can clearly see what a deep insight he had into the very core of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, and we can also see how his understanding covers and includes the whole range of spirituality. From this it is clear that this book is not born merely from study *(sravana)* of and reflection *(manana)* upon the teachings of Sri Bhagavan, but also from practice

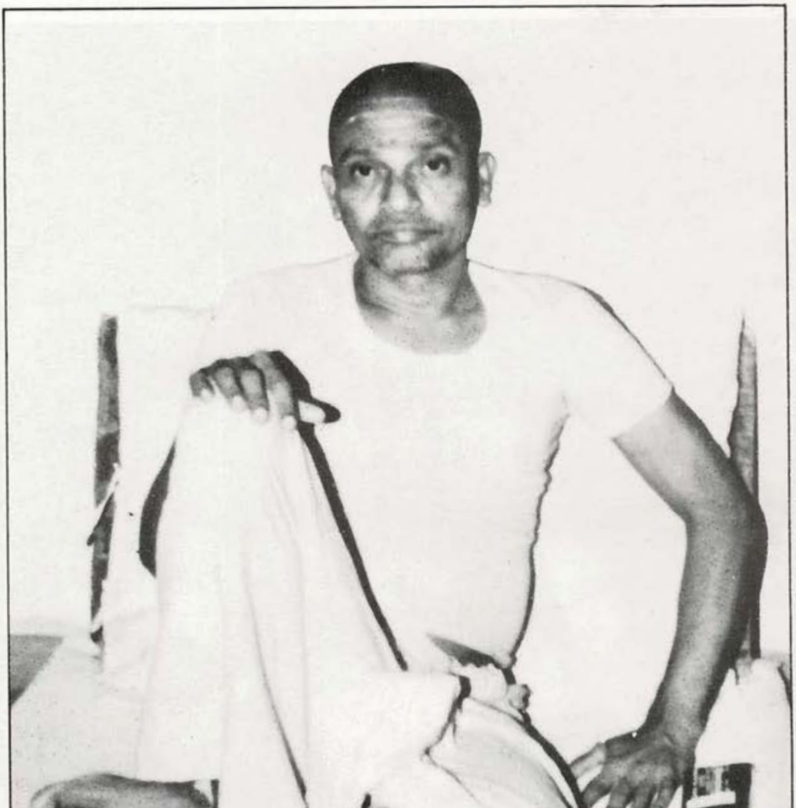
(nididhyasana) of those teachings and true experience *(anubhava)* of their goal.

Authority for most of the ideas expressed in this book can be found either in Sri Bhagavan's original Tamil works or in the various other books in which devotees have recorded His oral teachings. However, this book is not a mere rehash of all the familiar ideas found in other books. Not only do all the three parts of *The Path of Sri Ramana* present the wide range of Sri Bhagavan's teachings in a well arranged and coherent fashion, but they also provide a wealth of fresh and original insight into many of the ideas which are found only in seed-form in other books. Such freshness and originality is possible only because the author had direct personal experience both of the path taught by Sri Bhagavan and the goal shown by Him.

Since this book is thus based upon practical spiritual experience, and since it presents many subtle ideas, each of which bears a relation to all the others, the full import of this book cannot be adequately grasped by reading it just once. Having once read the book from beginning to end, if we again start to read from the beginning, we will be able to understand each of the ideas in a clearer light. Therefore, if we wish to derive the maximum benefit from this book, we should study it repeatedly, we should reflect over it deeply, and we should sincerely try to put into practice what we learn from it, because then only will we be able to understand with full clarity all the many subtle points expounded herein.

- PUBLISHER





Sri Sadhu Om

Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Arunachalaramanaya

A Brief Life History of Sri Ramana

*"Among all the globes, this earth is the only one for attaining Liberation, and among all the countries on earth, Bharatam (*India*) is the best. Among all the holy places (kshetras) in Bharatam, where various divine powers are manifest and functioning, Arunachalam is the foremost !"*

"Tiruvarur, Chidambaram and Kasi are the holy places which bestow Liberation upon those who are born in, who see, or who die in them respectively, but Arunachalam bestows Liberation upon anyone on earth who merely thinks of It !"

'*Sri Arunachala Venba*', verses 1 and 2

Arunachalam is the heart of the earth. It is the primal form (*adi lingam*) of Lord Siva. It is the Hill of the fire of Knowledge (*jnanagni*). Since It appeared as the Hill of the light of Knowledge between Brahma and Vishnu when they were deluded, destroying their egos and teaching them the true knowledge, Arunachalam was the *Jnana-Guru* even to them. Because it has held the seat (*peetam*) of *Jnana-Guru* for all the three worlds from the very beginning of time, Arunachalam has even now manifested as the form of the *Sadguru*, Bhagavan Sri Ramana, to instruct the whole world. Further, to hint to us indirectly that it is none other than the

primal Guru Dakshinamurti (who appeared as a young lad of sixteen), it came to Arunachalam and acceded to the seat of Guru at the age of sixteen. It lived there for more than half a century, saving countless souls from the disease of birth and death.

Since this Great One (*maha purusha*), who is generally called by the holy name Sri Ramana Bhagavan, addresses the Hill as Arunachalaramana in the last verse of His hymn *'Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai'*, since in *'Atma Vidya Kirtanam'* verse 5[1] He says that Self, which He experienced to be the Supreme Thing (*para vastu*), is that which is called Annamalai (Arunachalam), and since He replied to a devotee who asked about His real nature: "This Arunachalaramanan is the Supreme Self who blissfully shines as consciousness in the core of the heart-lotus of all souls beginning with Hari (Lord Vishnu)!", the secret comes to light that Arunachalam, itself is Ramana, Ramana Himself is Arunachalam, and that the holy name truly befitting Him is **'Sri Arunachala ramanan'! Hence, Om Namo Bhagavate Sri Arunachalaramanaya[2]!**

The Supreme Thing gradually matures the souls towards the achievement of Self-knowledge (*atma-jnana*) through so many births and finally, when they are fully mature, incarnates Itself as the *Sadguru*, pulls all such ripe souls to Its divine Feet from wheresoever on earth they were born and bestows upon them Its non-dual Union – such is the divine plan. Many are the special signs that are evident when the *Sadguru* incarnates, and those who are wise can understand from such signs that He alone is the *Sadguru*.

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1 The original words or Sri Bhagavan in this verse are: "...*annamalai yen anma..*", which mean either 'Self, which is called Annamalai' or 'Annamalai, my Self'.

2 Om, our obeisance to Bhagavan Sri Arunachalaramana.

The four Sanakadi Rishis, who were highly mature souls, were reluctant to take any of the three manifestations of God, Brahma, Vishnu or Siva, as Guru, and wandered away in search of the *Sadguru* until they eventually became old. At that time, Sri Dakshinamurti, who in spite of having no Guru was Immersed in Self, was sitting in the form of a sixteen-year-old boy under the banyan tree, facing southwards with *chinmudra* (the hand-pose indicating knowledge, chit). When they came into His gracious Presence they felt attracted, and through the maturity of their understanding they recognized, 'This is the real *Sadguru*'! They sat at His Feet and through His silent Teaching realized Self. Just as Sri Dakshinamurti, the original Guru who Himself (*atman*) was Guru to Himself, became the Guru for all the worlds, Sri Ramana Bhagavan has also become the Guru for all the worlds without Himself having a Guru. It is a well-known fact that all the Great Ones who came on earth, including Sri Rama and Sri Krishna, had to have a Guru in human form. Although the Buddha, and a few very mature souls like Him, were able to obtain knowledge of the Reality without a *Jnana- Guru*, even He attained the goal only after having gone to many fake and worthless gurus and having been disappointed many times, and after having undertaken strenuous efforts alone for many years. But Bhagavan Sri Ramana, prompted only by the fear of death which overpowered Him of its own accord, attained Self-realization within a short moment as a sixteen-year-old schoolboy, without a *Guru* either in human form or in any of the forms of God, and without having done any *sadhana* or *tapas*! The knowledge of the Reality which dawned in Him on that day ever remained with Him as His

natural state (*sahaja sthiti*), nothing being added to or removed from it. Even though Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who thus shines as the foremost *Jnana-Guru* for the whole world, is really none other than the nameless and formless Supreme Thing, in accordance with our ignorant outlook of taking the course of the life of His body as His holy life history, let us see a sketch of His biography.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana was born on the 30th December 1879 as the second son of Sundaram Iyer and Azhahammal in **Tiruchuzhi,** a Siva-*kshetra* thirty miles south-east of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, a province of south India. His parents named Him **Venkataraman.** His elder brother was Nagaswami, His younger brother was Nagasundaram, and Alarmelu was their sister.

Venkataraman completed His primary education in Tiruchuzhi and Dindukkal. When He was twelve years old, owing to the fact that His father passed away,[3] He and His elder brother moved to their paternal uncle's house in Madurai to continue their higher education in the American Mission High School. Though He had a clear and sharp intellect and a keen power of memory, it seems that He did not use them in His school work. He was merely an average student in His class, but having a healthy body. He was foremost in wrestling, football, staff-fighting, swimming, and so on. Before He stood for the tenth standard examination, the great divine change in His life took place all of a sudden. To bring about this great change He did not read

3 When, after hearing of His father's death, Venkataraman came from Dindukkal to Tiruchuzhi to see him, He wondered: "When father is lying here, why do they say that he has gone?". Some elders then told Him, "If this were your father, would he not receive you with love? So you see, he has gone." This information might have roused in Him the idea that this body was not his father, the person. We may assume that this was a seed which afterwards – blossomed in Him at the age of sixteen.

any scripture nor did He have a Guru. Though by chance He had read the '*Periyapuranam*', the lives of the sixty-three Tamil Saints, even that was not the actual cause for His Self-realization. Then what could have been the cause?

It was on a day in mid-July in the year 1896. Venkataraman was sitting alone in a small room upstairs. Though there was no sickness in the body, a great fear arose in Him that He was going to die. It happened not merely as an imaginary or superficial fear, but as an actual experience of death. He was not perturbed by this. He did not even inform anyone of it. He boldly welcomed the forthcoming death and ventured to scrutinize it and find the result of this scrutiny for Himself. "Yes, death has come; let it come. What is death? To whom does it come? To me. Who am I? What is it that is dying? Yes, it is this body that is dying; let it die" : deciding thus, He laid down stretching His arms and legs. Closing His lips tightly and remaining without speech or breath, He turned His attention very keenly towards Himself. Death was experienced! What did He come to know at that time?

"All right, this body is dead. Now it will be taken to the cremation ground and burnt. It will become ashes. But with the destruction of this body, am I also destroyed? Am I really this body? Untouched by this death which has turned the body into a corpse, here and now **I am still existing and shining!** Then I am not this perishable body. I and it are different. **I am** the indestructible **'I'** (Self). Of all things, I, unbound by the body, alone am real. The body and world are meant only for destruction, but I, who transcend the body, am the eternal **Supreme Thing!**"

This true knowledge of Self *(atma-jnana)* shone forth clear in Him as a direct experience, and the fear of death which had risen in Him vanished once and for ever. From

that time onwards, this state of Self-experience continued to shine permanently in Him as His natural state unbound by time and space and without increase or decrease. Although afterwards many people believed that in His early years in Tiruvannamalai Sri Bhagavan was performing deliberate austerities *(tapas)* or doing some spiritual practices *(sadhanas)*, on a number of occasions in His later years He clearly refuted such ideas. He once said, "The sun that shone in Madurai was found to remain the same in Tiruvannamalai. Nothing was newly added to or removed from my experience".[4]

Thus, without an outer Guru and without any inner age-long strenuous *sadhana*, Venkataraman attained on the very first attempt **the natural state of Self-knowledge** *(sahaja-*

4 On another occasion, on 4th October 1946, when a devotee named Professor D.S. Sarma asked Him whether there was ever any period of purgation or *sadhana* in His life, Sri Bhagavan replied :-

"I know no such period. I never performed any *pranayama* or *japa*. I knew no *mantras*. I had no idea of meditation or contemplation. Even when I came to hear of such things later, I was never attracted by them. Even now my mind refuses to pay any attention to them. *Sadhana* implies an object to be gained and the means of gaining it. What is there to be gained which we do not already possess? In meditation, concentration and contemplation, what we have to do is only not to think of anything, but to be still! Then we shall be in our natural state. This natural state is given many names – *moksha, jnana, atma*, etc. There was a time when I used to remain with my eyes closed. That does not mean that I was practising *any sadhana* then. Even now I sometimes remain with my eyes closed. If people choose to say that I am doing some *sadhana* at the moment, let them say so. It makes no difference to me. People seem to think that by practising some elaborate *sadhana* the Self would some day descend upon them as something very big and with tremendous glory and they would then have what is called *sakshatkaram* (realization). The Self is *sakshat* (direct), all right, but there is no *karam* (doing) or *kritam* (done) about it. The word *karam* implies one's doing something. But the Self is realized not by one's doing something, but by one's refraining from doing anything – by remaining still and being simply what one really is !"

atma-jnana-sthiti), which is declared by the Upanishads and all other Vedantic sciptures to be the unsurpassed state and the supreme benefit of human birth!

This experience, Self-attainment, brought forth indescribable vast changes even in the outward life of Venkataraman. Since it was now His clear experience that He was the eternal, perfect Reality, which is other than the body, from that day onwards His life was transformed into a new and wondrous one which could in no way be compatible with that of ordinary people, a life which they could not even understand, let alone imitate, no matter how hard they might try.

After this experience, the slight interest in school lessons which there was before left Him completely; He still went to school, but simply to please others. Even the taste for games, which once appealed to Him so much, disappeared entirely from His mind. The love and attachments towards friends and relatives also faded away, as did the interest in food and mundane activities. He who in the past had always fought for the right, now became indifferent and no longer reacted in any way towards any kind of wrong or right. His previous nature of responding with severe blows if anyone scolded Him changed, and now a sweet smile of forgiveness and indifference would appear on His face as a reply!

What a wonderful change! The Self-experience transformed Him into a perfect Sadhu. Love, non-violence, patience, compassion, forgiveness, control over the senses, humility, fearlessness – all such divine qualities settled in Him naturally and in full, not due to practice but as a result of Self-experience. To Him a life of worldly activities was now meaningless, dry and unreal, just as a dream is useless,

empty and unreal to him who has woken up from it. He was often seen to be sitting in solitude, absorbed and revelling in Self. In truth, the former Venkataraman was no longer there, and **Bhagavan Ramana** alone did shine!

An incident which gave a hint of this Self-absorption even at the age of twelve took place in Dindukkal when Venkataraman was studying there, but those who were around Him at that time did not recognize its importance and preciousness. One day, while His relatives had gone out, Venkataraman lay on His bed after locking the house from inside. On their return, even though they knocked at the door and called Him loudly, the door was not opened. After finding another way to enter the house, they again tried to wake Him from His sound sleep by shaking, rolling and, beating His body heavily. But all in vain, Venkataraman would not wake up! After some time, however, He woke up of His own accord. The people assembled there wondered at this exclaiming : "A sleep of Kumbhakarnan[5]!". But this state was neither a dull sleep nor a swoon, it was in fact the state of *samadhi!* Once, years after, Sri Bhagavan remarked about this state : "The result of what was done and left[6] had now resumed again, on account of which the attention was always in the source (Self)."

Since Venkataraman had lost all interest in His studies, His school-teacher started to punish Him. Even Nagaswami, His elder brother, grew angry noticing the vast change in Him. Whenever he saw Him sitting in Self-absorption, he would jeer at Him : "What a great Sage,

5 Kumbhakarnan was a rakshasa in the Ramayana renowned for his long sleep lasting six months.

6 i.e. In previous births (refer to 'The Path of Sri Ramana – Part Two', appendix 2, 'The resumptlon of actions birth after birth').

a *yogiswara!"*; but Venkataraman, who had the clear knowledge of the Reality and was thereby unshakable, did not mind all this. One day His teacher gave Him an imposition to write three times an English grammar lesson which he had failed to learn.

Next day, it was a Saturday, the 29th of August 1896; Sri Ramana had written the imposition twice when He felt a dejection towards this useless work. Throwing away the pencil and notebook, He sat up and closed His eyes in Self-absorption *(nishtha)*. Nagaswami, who was sitting nearby, was saddened at seeing this. With the intention of correcting his brother, he exclaimed with pity and anger, "Yes, why all these for one like this?". To Him who would usually have been indifferent towards such a remark, the words seemed meaningful on that particular occasion. He thought, "Yes, what he says is true. What do I now have to do here and with these things? Nothing!". He immediately resolved to leave the house. All at once the remembrance of Arunachalam flashed spontaneously through His mind. He decided, "Yes, Arunachalam is the only place for me to go to !". As He got up and started to walk out, Nagaswami asked Him to get five rupees from their aunt and pay his college fees.

Sri Ramana consulted an old map of Madras presidency, which unfortunately did not show the branch-line from Villupuram to Katpadi, midway along which lies Tiruvannamalai (Arunachalam); He therefore thought that Tindivanam was the closest railway station to Tiruvannamalai. Out of the five rupees given by His aunt, He took with Him only three. He hastly wrote a note and, leaving it along with the remaining two rupees, He left the house. The note said :-

in search of my Father

I λ by His order am going, leaving this place. This is undertaking only a good cause. Therefore no one need grieve over this action. To see this, there is no need even to spend money.

Your fees have not yet been paid. Herewith are Rs. 2	Thus ________________

Instead of a signature, only a straight line was drawn at the bottom of the note. The formation of the sentences here holds a deep meaning. 'I', the word starting the first sentence, changed into 'this' in the next, and even this 'this' had vanished by the end of the note, which is concluded by the absence of a signature!

Yes, the human body, which was considered to be 'I' so long as the sense of 'I' (*ahankaram*) and the sense of 'mine' (*mamakaram*) lasted, became to him 'this', an insentient and alien object, as soon as the 'I' and 'mine' had been surrendered to God! When the union (i.e. oneness) with the Supreme finally takes place, what else can remain as a separate entity! It is this state of oneness which is shown by the absence of a signature. How clear, the state of perfect *Jnana* [7] even at the age of sixteen!! The insertion just after the word 'I' of the phrase 'in search of my Father' clearly points out that so long as the sense of 'I' is retained one should depend upon God as one's sole refuge. No would be non-dualist (*advaitin*) can rightly deny God and a dual love towards Him so long as his sense of individuality survives.

Sri Ramana went to Madurai railway station. In those days, the three rupees which He had taken thinking it to be the approximate train fare was exactly the right amount to

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7 *Jnana :* the state of true knowledge, in which nothing exists but Self.

go from Madurai to Tiruvannamalai. But what was to happen? Not knowing that He could go all the way to Tiruvannamalai by train, He took a ticket for Tindivanam instead and got into the train. During the journey, a maulvi (an Islamic priest) sat near Him and talked to Him of his own accord, informing Him that He should change train at Villupuram to go to Tiruvannamalai. Now, with the money still remaining, Sri Ramana was able to reach only as far as Mambazhappattu. There He got down and walked ten miles in the direction of Arunachalam. He reached Araiyani Nallur temple, which is built on a rock, but was not allowed to stay there for the night. He then walked down with the priest to Viratteswara temple in Kizhur. After the *puja* was over, Sri Ramana, who, was tired and hungry, asked the priest for some *prasadam* (the food consecrated by being offered to God). The brahmin priest refused, but the temple-piper, whose heart was moved on seeing this, pleaded with him, "Sir, kindly give Him at least my portion of the *prasadam.*" On account of the request of that virtuous man, who illustrated by his action the description of a perfect brahmin: "The brahmin is he, the virtuous, who is compassionate to every creature on earth" [8], a little food was placed in the hands of Sri Ramana. He spent that night nearby, and the next morning which was the day of Sri Krishna Jayanthi, He happened to come to the house of one Muttukrishna Bhagavatar. Aftar He had taken some food in the Bhagavatar's house, the two gold ear-rings which He was wearing came suddenly to His memory; removing them from His ears, He handed them over to the Bhagavatar and was given four rupees. With this money He bought a train ticket to Tiruvannamalai. Early next morning, Tuesday the 1st September 1896, he arrived at Sri Arunachalam, which

8 . *'Tirukkural'*, verse 30

had occupied His heart from His childhood and which had now robbed off His mind and drawn Him near.

He went directly to the inner shrine of Sri Arunachaleswara temple and surrendered Himself completely'[9]. The intense heat which was till then in His body at once subsided. The journey of the soul, the river, had ended once for all at its destination, the ocean of Bliss. Sri Ramana came out of the inner shrine, perfectly contented with the treasure – the fullness of *Jnana*. Since all freedom of mind, speech and body had been surrendered to Sri Arunachaleswara, Sri Ramana became effortlessly silent. When someone approached Him and asked, Swami, will you have your head shaved?", Sri Ramana nodded affirmatively being convinced that it was the will of Sri Aruhachaleswara. His long, fine and wavy hair, which was like a beautiful black creeper, was in no time removed and a clean-shaven head remained. He threw away the sacred thread, the sign of His caste. From His dhoti He tore off a piece for a loin-cloth and discarded the rest, together with the remaining money which was tied in a corner. The packet of sweets given to Him by the loving lady in the Bhagavatar's house was thrown into Ayyankulam tank. He did not even take a bath after being shaved, but on His way back to the temple there was an unexpected downpour. Perhaps this shower from the sky was the ceremonial bath (*avabritha-snanam*) given by Sri Arunachaleswara to His divine Son on the completion of the greatest *tapas!* Sri Ramana reached the temple and sat absorbed in *samadhi* in the thousand-pillared mantapam.

9 In later years Sri Bhagavan revealed that when He entered the temple the gate of the inner shrine was open and no one was present. He also added that at that time He embraced the *Lingam*.

But can the foolish world understand the greatness of Sages? Some wicked people and mischievous children started to trouble Him by mocking, "Mad boy, dumb fellow", and by throwing stones and pieces of broken pots. Yes, it is the usual treatment available to all Great Ones who came on earth, is it not? Did not Buddha, Mahavira, Jesus and others receive such treatment from the people? This was therefore nothing new! Though indifferent to them, Sri Rarnana withdrew Himself from their sight and went down into a nearby cellar, the *'Patala Lingam'*, where no one dared to go even in day-time as it was so dark. There He sat immersed in *samadhi*, concealing Himself behind the *lingam*. Days rolled on, yet He did not stir from *samadhi!* Since He was established in oneness with the Reality – the state transcending the knowledge of the world and body –, how could there be hunger and thirst to either the body or the mind? For Him who was drowned in the bliss of *Jnana* – the state of bodilessness – how could there be a feeling of pain or any misery caused by the outside world?

On the damp ground where Sri Ramana was sitting were many ants, termites, mosquitoes, flies and centipedes. They began to eat away the lower side of His thighs and blood started oozing out. The oozing blood clotted, pus formed, and both mixed with the mud, thus sealing the body to the ground. Yet He was not at all disturbed by this, for He knew nothing of it. Do we not read stories in the puranas about Rishis such as Valmiki who were immersed in *tapas* while ant-hills grew over their bodies and birds made nests and lived on their heads? By living thus before our eyes, Sri Ramana has proved in modern times that these stories were not false!

People came to know of this many days later through **Sri Seshadri Swami,** a great soul who lived in

Tiruvannamalai at that time. Though Sri Seshadri Swami appeared to be a madman, he was in fact a saint, and some good folk understood his exalted state and revered him. He was able to recognize the genuine greatness of the *Jnana* of Sri Ramana : 'The legs of the snake are known only to a snake', says the proverb. One day, having just come out of the Patala Lingam, Sri Seshadri Swami informed Venkatachala Mudaliar, a devotee of his, "There is a small Swami inside, go and see"; so saying, he walked away. Though it was day-time, Venkatachala Mudaliar took a lantern and along with some others entered the Patala Lingam. They called Sri Ramana loudly, but as there was no response they lifted His body. Alas, because the body was sealed to the earth and was now forcibly separated, blood rushed out through the fresh wounds! On seeing this they were awe-struck. Carefully and gently they brought the body out and kept it in the Gopuram Subramania temple. Even then Sri Ramana did not regain body-consciousness, but remained in *samadhi!*

Some devotees, prompted by their conviction that Sri Rarmana was God in human form, engaged themselves with great fervour in His service. Once in many days, whenever He opened His eyes, they would feed Him With a little milk, crushed bananas, or liquid food. The outward activities of Sri Ramana such as taking food and answering the calls of nature went on just like those of a sleeping child. On those occasions when His eyes did not open for some days, they would themselves open His mouth and try to pour in at least a small quantity of liquid mixture.

Sri Ramana stayed in Arunachaleswara temple for a few months, but He did not like people often crowding around to see Him; preferring to be alone, He moved to

Gurumurtham temple, which was fairly far away from the town, and for about one and a half years He remained there in *samadhi*.

In the meanwlhile, the note which He left in Madurai had been found, whereupon His elder brother Nagaswami, His mother, uncle and other relatives and friends had begun to search for Him in many places, but had so far been dissappointed. At last they came to know of His whereabouts through one Annamalai Tambiran, who had been serving Sri Ramana in Gurumurtham temple. Since Subbaiyar the uncle with whom Sri Ramana had been living in Madurai, had recently passed away, Nellaiyappaiyar, Subbaiyar's younger brother, started at once for Tiruvannamalai. He came to Gurumurtham, but no matter how much he entreated Him to come back to Madurai, Sri Ramana remained silent. Having failed in his attempt, Nellaiyappiyar returned home empty-handed.

Seeing his fruitless effort, Azhahammal herself came to Tiruvannamalai accompanied by Nagaswami as soon as she could. At that time, December 1898, Sri Ramana was staying on Pavazhakundru, an eastern spur of Arunachalam. When His mother saw the pitiable condition of His body, she burst into tears and prayed :

"My dear child, come back to Madurai. How can I possibly bear to live comfortably in a home when you are lying here on stones and thorns? Don't be stubborn my boy, please don't show such dispassion! Your mother's heart is torn apart. Come home, my child! "She wept bitterly and implored Him in ever so many ways. Nagaswami also repeatedly pleaded and repented: "Alas! I didn't really mean it when I spoke in that way; I never imagined that it would bring about such a calamity!" Though they stayed and

appealed for ten days, not even the slightest sign either of consent or of refusal appeared on the face of Sri Ramana. He remained as silent as ever. Some of the onlookers, being unable to bear with this pitiful sight, gave Sri Ramana a piece of paper and a pencil, and begged Him, "Swami, your mother is sobbing and her heart is bleeding; graciously give your reply, at least in writing; you need not break your silence!" He wrote :-

"According to the *prarabdha* (i.e. destiny) of each one, He, its Ordainer, being in every place [i.e. in every soul] will make it play its role. That which is not to happen will never happen, however hard one tries. That which is to happen will not stop, in spite of any amount of obstruction. This is certain! Hence, to remain silent is the best."

What a steadfastness born of Self-knowledge *(jnana)!* What a steadfastness free not only of affection, but also of aversion! How great an unshakability of mind, when even a mountain would have moved!

> "The state of one who abides unshaken in Self
> has more grandeur than the mightiest mountain:"
>
> *"Tirukkural"*, verse 124

What could the devotees and His mother do? She returned home afflicted.

Do not many among us wonder why Sri Ramana behaved in such a fashion towards His mother, since it is now a well-known fact that not only all human beings, but also birds and beasts enjoyed His gracious benevolence?

So long as Azhahammal was filled with motherly affection and showed the ignorance of attachment: 'You are my child. I am your mother, your protector! Come home with me', was it not the task of Sri Ramana to remove that

ignorant outlook and thus save her? Therefore, by the sword of such silence He was cutting at the knot of attachment in her. This was not to abandon her, but to take her finally as His own; it was only the first step to make her renounce everything and to come to the Feet of her son, the embodiment of *Jnana*. Moreover, on another occasion, in 1914, when His mother came to see Him and happened to suffer from a high fever, Sri Ramana composed four verses, whereupon the fever subsided. She then returned to Madurai.

Soon after His mother's first visit, Sri Ramana moved to Virupakshi cave. It was in those years that the swarm of disciples gathered around Him to drink the nectar of instructions flowing from the fully bloomed lotus of *Jnana*. Yes, 'When the tree yields ripe fruit, doss one need to call the fruit-bats?'. Sri Bhagavan's mere gracious and silent presence shone as the Sun-of-Self and cleared the doubts of the devotees and blossomed their hearts. The young Sri Ramana was only about twenty years old at that time, but the disciples who came to Him with the hunger for *Jnana* were much older and very learned!

> "How wonderful ! Young was the Guru who shone under the banyan tree, and aged were the disciples who came ! Silence was the speech given by the beloved Guru, and the doubts in the disciples' minds were cleared !"[10]

– the same wonder happened in the Presence of Sri Ramana!

Though the world was able to receive some instructions from Him in writing, and later orally also, there

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10 A Sanskrit verse on Sri Dakshinamurti which was translated into Tamil by Sri Bhagavan.

were many aspirants whose doubts have all been cleared and who have been saved by His mere silent Presence.

> "Silence is the unequalled eloquence –
> the state of Grace that rises within."
>
> – *Sri Bhagavan*

'Silence is the unfailing Teaching (*upadesa*). Writing or speech cannot stand equal to it; sometimes they may even be an obstruction!' – thus says Sri Ramana.

In 1900, **Gambhiram Seshayyar,** who was making efforts on the path of *raja yoga,* often visited Sri Ramana and, whenever He opened His eyes from *samadhi,* would ask Him questions regarding spiritual practices. Gambhiram Seshayyar would give Sri Ramana pieces of paper and a pen to write His replies; the replies written by Sri Ramana on such occasions were afterwards edited by **Sri Natananandar** and Published by the Asramam in the original Tamil under the title '*Vichara Sangraham*'. The work '*Nan Yar?*' ('Who am I?') was received from Sri Ramana in a similar manner by **Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai.** Though small in size, this work has now become famous on account of its power to save humanity by showing the right way to the supreme benefit. The answers given by Sri Ramana to the questions of Sri Natananandar have become the work '*Upadesa Manjari*'. In 1907, a great Samskrit poet, **Kavya Kanta Ganapati Sastri,** came to visit Sri Ramana. He was an ascetic (*tapasvi*) who had performed many millions of *mantra-japas,* but he was still not able to understand what is real *tapas;* hence he approached Sri Ramana and said, "I have learnt all the Vedas, performed millions of *mantra-japas,* undergone fasting and other austerities, yet I still do not know what *tapas* really is. Please instruct me." Sri Bhagavan replied: "If watched wherefrom the 'I' starts, there the mind merges;

that is *tapas.*" However, when Ganapati Sastri further asked, "Is it possible to attain the same state through *japa?*", Sri Ramana replied: "When a *mantram* is pronounced, if watched wherefrom the sound starts, there the mind will merge; that is *tapas.*"

After receiving these instructions, Sri Kavya Kanta Ganapati Sastri declared: "He is no ordinary soul. He is the perfect *Jnana-Guru*. Since He ever remains in natural Self-abidance, He is verily Bhagavan Maharshi", and praised Him in verses as **Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi.** It is only from that day that He was known by this name.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana is a unique and divine poet. His poetic genius in Tamil, His mother-tongue, breathes a fresh life into the sacred style of the poets of yore. Besides being compact and terse, the flow of His sublime Tamil poetry is noble and pregnant with new and rich import. To say the truth, Bhagavan Ramana is a Vedic Rishi who has given us Tamil Upanishads. Further, not only was He a poet in Tamil, but also in Sanskrit, Malayalam and Telugu. He was the first to have been able to compose Telugu verses in *venba*, an extremely difficult Tamil metre.

Mother Tamil has been adorned by Him with ever so many gems of *Jnana* in the form of verses of unsurpassed worth! However, Bhagavan Ramana was not merely a writer. He never had an intention (*sankalpa*) to write anything. Indeed, intentionlessness (*nissankalpa*) was the state in which He lived from the day He set foot in Arunachalam. How then was the world blessed with at least some words of instruction from Bhagavan Sri Ramana? Do we not admit the existence ot God, the Supreme Power who creates, sustains and destroys the world? It is that same Power who,

having the prayers, doubts and questions of the devotees as its motive and using Sri Bhagavan's mind, speech and body as its instruments, gave through Him spiritual instructions for the salvation of humanity. Sometimes, sweet and precious Tamil verses would flow from Him in answer to the questions of devotees. The instructions of Sri Bhagavan which we now have are those which escaped from His lips in this manner. All of them, when collected and edited, make up His complete works. Among them, five *stotras,* hymns, and three *sastras,* scriptures, are the important works. The *stotras* are **'Sri Arunachala Stuti Panchakam'** ('The Five Hymns to Sri Arunachala'), and the *sastras* are, **'Upadesa Undhiyar' 'Ulladhu Narpadhu'** and **'Guru Vachaka Kovai'.**

In response to **Sri Muruganar,** the foremost devotee of Sri Bhagavan and a great Tamil poet, Sri Bhagavan not only composed in Tamil ***'Upadesa Undhiyar'*** but He also compiled ***'Ulladhu Narpadhu',*** which is an unequalled Upanishad, by revising some of His previous verses and by composing many new ones. *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'* is the treasure- house of Sri Ramana's instructions collected and preserved in Tamil verses by Sri Muruganar, all of them being the day-to-day sayings of Sri Bhagavan from the very early days. These three important works of Sri Bhagavan, which have come into existence having Sri Muruganar as the sole motive, form **'Sri Ramana Prastanatrayam'** (the three works of divine authority on *Moksha* by Sri Ramana).

Arunachalam, the sacred Hill, is the primal and foremost form of Lord Siva. Indeed it is Siva Himself. Sages not only show us the path, but also set an example by treading upon it themselves; in this manner, Bhagavan Sri

Ramana Himself often did *Arunachala-pradakshinam*[11] in the company of His devotees. It is described in the puranas how this *Giripradakshinam* was the sole means by which Unnamulai Ambikai, the consort of Sri Arunachaleswara, became Ardhanariswara (when her form combined with that of the Lord). Moreover, when even Sri Arunachaleswara, the Divinity in the temple, circumambulates the Hill twice every year, how can we conceive of the greatness of *Arunachala-pradakshinam?* It was on the occasion of one such *prdakshinam*, in the days when He was living in Virupakshi cave, that Sri Bhagavan composed the renowned **'Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai'**, the first of the Five Hymns. Many thousands of His devotees now recite this hymn as a means to remember Arunachalam, which bestows Liberation when merely thought of.

To have been the birth-place of the 'Guru for the whole universe' (*loka maha guru*) is the great fortune of Tamil Nadu. Far greater still was the fortune of Azhahammal to have given birth to such a Great One, and immense was her merit to have sacrificed her son for the benefit of the whole world! How could such a sacrifice have gone in vain? It ultimately crowned her with the attainment of Liberation! As time went on, Azhahammal became a prey to the divine attraction of Sri Bhagavan, who lived as an *atitasrami*[12] – one for whom there is neither attraction nor aversion towards relatives. Gradually Sri Bhagavan's Grace ripened her and made her renounce her native place, home, and all family and worldly attachments, till at last in 1916 she returned and took refuge at His Feet, thus becoming one

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11 *Pradakshinam* means walking barefoot around a sacred object having it to one's right-hand side.

12 *Atitasrami* : one beyond the four *asramas*, the stages of life in Hindu society.

among the disciples who had already surrendered to Him. Nagasundaram, Sri Bhagavan's younger brother, followed her and also took refuge at His Feet. He later became a sannyasin, taking the name **Sri Niranjanananda Swami,** and it was he who was the sole cause for the formation and the development of the present Sri Ramanasramam. Some of the devotees who were with Sri Bhagavan at that time feared that He might go away if relatives also crowded around Him; furthermore, some objections were raised against Azhahammal staying with Sri Bhagavan. Little did they know, however, that relatives could now only float on the surface like the water-lily, and could never be like salt, which dissolves in and contaminates the water. Thus Sri Bhagavan exemplified to the modern world the strength of the natural state of Self, by which one can live with mental detachment in all circumstances.

Later on, the devotees constructed a small and beautiful *asramam* in a secluded spot still higher up the Hill, and since the major part of the construction was done by the single handed effort and service of Kandaswami, a devotee, it was named after him as **Skandasramam**. Sri Bhagavan lived there till the end of 1922. In May of that year, Azhahammal fell ill. During her last hours, Sri Bhagavan sat by her side placing His hands, those hands of divine Power, the right one on her heart and the left one on her head. At that time a long and severe inner fight took place between her past tendencies towards action (*karma-vasanas*), which would have given her many future births, and the Power of Grace flowing through the hands of Sri Bhagavan. At last all those past tendencies were crushed and destroyed and her soul quietly returned and merged into the real state, *Brahman.* Her body left her on the night of 19th May 1922, whereupon Sri Bhagavan indicated that

she had attained Liberation. Her sacred body was buried on the banks of Palitirtham, a tank at the foot of the southern slope of Arunachalam. The *Sivalingam* which was installed over her tomb is now known as **Sri Matrubhuteswara.** It was appropriate that in later years the filial love of Sri Niranjanananda Swami built a temple for his mother, who had built a body-temple for Sri Bhagavan to live in on earth.

After Azhahammal's passing away, Sri Bhagavan would often take a walk from Skandasramam to her tomb, which in early days was sheltered by a small thatched hut. Then, in December 1922, according to the divine Ordinance of Sri Arunachalam, He came down and settled there permanently. Many devotees came to live in the Presence of Sri Bhagavan and in due course there grew around Him many large and handsome buildings, which now constitute the present **Sri Ramanasramam.**

Perfect equality was the principle lived by Sri Bhagavan in Sri Ramanasramam. Till the end He wore only a loin cloth, which is less than the dress needed by even the poorest among our countrymen. The same was the case with His food, for which He always sat among the devotees, and which was the same as that served to all – in fact it was rather less than what was served to others. Whatever eatables devotees offered Him would be equally distributed, then and there, to everyone in His presence. Not only human beings, but even cows, dogs, monkeys, squirrels, crows and peacocks enjoyed perfect freedom and full rights in the Asramam. **cow Lakshmi,** for example, lived there as a pet daughter and attained Liberation in her last hour by the divine touch of Sri Bhagavan.

The doors of the small Hall where Sri Bhagavan lived were open day and night, and to all. In a life such as

His, which was shining as a vast open space of mere consciousness where was the necessity to hide Himself and how to do so? Even in the middle of the night devotees were free to go and see Him in the Hall. "Defects alone need to hide, a pure heart need not," is a wise saying of saint Auvaiyar! To have the *darsan* of Sri Bhagavan was a great fortune which was not bound by any condition and which was open to all people and at all times. When He gave a warm welcome even to the thieves who came at night, saying, "You may come in and take whatever you want," what better proof is needed of Sri Bhagavan's sense of equality?

It was at 11-30 in the middle of the night of the 26th of June 1924. Though at that time Sri Ramanasramam consisted of only a few thatched sheds, some thieves came thinking it to be a rich mutt. They tried to break in through the windows by smashing them, and threatened to destroy everything. The noise woke up the devotees who were sleeping in the shed where Sri Bhagavan was lying. Sri Bhagavan invited the thieves to come in through the proper doorway and asked the devotees to give them a hurricane-lamp so that they could look for whatever they wanted, yet they shouted angrily, "Where are you keeping your money?". "We are sadhus who live by begging, we have no money. From what you can find here, you may take away anything you want. We will come outside," so saying, Sri Bhagavan came and sat outside followed by the devotees. As they came out of the shed, the thieves beat them with sticks, and one blow even fell on the thigh of Sri Bhagavan. "If you are still not satisifed, beat the other thigh as well," said Sri Bhagavan, feeling sorry for them!

Was this to be the limit of His kindness towards the thieves? No, He also prevented a young devotee who,

unable to bear the sight of Sri Bhagavan being beaten, jumped up with an iron bar in retaliation. Sri Bhagavan advised him, "Let them do their *dharma* [i.e. role]. We are sadhus, we should not give up our *dharma*. In future, the world will blame only us if any wrong happens. When our teeth bite our tongue, do we break them and throw them away?"

> "Though others do wrong to one, it is best not to return the same in wrath."
>
> *'Tirukkural'*, verse 157

Some days later the police caught the thieves and brought them before Sri Bhagavan, and an officer asked Him to identify the one who had beaten Him on that night. Sri Bhagavan at once replied with a smile, "Find out whom I beat [in a previous birth], for it is he who has beaten me now!". He never denounced the criminal!

> "Conquer the foe by your worthy patience and for ever forget the wrong done to you on account of ignorance."
>
> *'Tirukkural'*, verse 157

> "The right way of punishing the wrong-doer is to do good to him and to forget his wrong."
>
> *'Tirukkural'*, verse 314

As time went by, people throughout the world came to know that Sri Bhagavan was the living embodiment of all that is taught in the Bible, Tirukkural, Gita and Upanishads, and were attracted to His Feet. Forgetting the national differences such as Indian and foreigner and the religious differences such as Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jain and Sikh, from far and abroad they flocked to the Feet of Sri Bhagavan and adored Him, for such was their

conviction that He was indeed the Guru of their own religion! Many among them achieved true knowledge, some by merely seeing Sri Bhagavan, some by living in His divine Presence, some by dedicating themselves wholeheartedly to His service, and some by following His teachings.

The former president of India, Mr. Rajendra Prasad, once went to the asramam of Mahatma Gandhi and said, "Bapuji, I have come to you for peace!" The abode of peace was known well to Gandhiji and hence he advised, "if you want peace, go to Sri Ramanasramam and remain for a few days in the Presence of Sri Ramana Maharshi, without talking or asking any question." Mr. Rajandra Prasad accordingly arrived at Sri Ramanasramam on 14th August 1938. Though those who accompanied him spent their time in asking Sri Bhagavan questions regarding spiritual matters and in visiting all the places on the Hill where He had lived, Mr. Rajendra Prasad did not move away from the Presence of Sri Bhagavan. Besides, according to the advice of Gandhiji, he spent the whole of that week without raising any question or doubt. At the time of his taking leave of Sri Bhagavan, he approached Him and humbly enquired, "O Bhagavan, it was Gandhiji himself who sent me here. Is there any message that I may take to him?"

Sri Bhagavan graciously answered : "The same Power which works here is working there also! Where is the need for words when heart speaks to heart?" These are unique words of wisdom revealing the secret that it is the one Supreme Thing alone that governs the whole universe through all the innumerable souls! Just like Rajendra Prasad and Gandhiji, all men of high position and power, all great poets, scholars, politicians, philosophers and religious leaders who lived in our country during His time praised

the glory of His *Jnana*. It is the essential teachings of such a Great One, the Guru for the whole universe, that form the two parts of **'The Path of Sri Ramana'.**

Maharshi Ramana taught two paths as the main spiritual practices (*sadhanas*) for the salvation of humanity. They are (1) the path of **Self- enquiry**, that is, knowing oneself (one's real nature) by enquiring 'Who am I?', and (2) the path of **self-surrender**, that is, surrendering oneself (the ego) completely to God. The former is **the path of knowledge** (*jnana marga*), and the latter is **the path of devotion** (*bhakti marga*). Is not the aim of all the various researches going on in the world to know about the world and God – the second and third persons –, rather than to know oneself, the first person? Man, who makes so much effort to know about the world and God, still does not know who he himself really is. How? We say 'I am a man'; this is not a correct knowledge of ourself, but only ignorance. We feel that we are a man because we mistake a human body, our possession, for 'we', the possessor. Separating ourself from our possession (the body) by means of the enquiry 'Who am I?' and acquiring the right knowledge about the possessor ('I') is the best research of all and the best knowledge of all. The knowledge 'I am the body' (which is the ego) is a false knowledge of ourself. The true knowledge of ourself is that in which we know that we are the unlimited Self (*atman*).

What is the benefit of thus attaining true Self-knowledge? It is only when one knows oneself as Self that real good can be done to all creatures on earth. How? Only when Self- knowledge dawns will the truth be known that we alone are the reality of all living beings, and only then will the true love towards all blossom in our heart. Until

this Self-knowledge is obtained, one cannot truly love all creatures merely by talking and propagating on platforms. "Love thy neighbour as thyself". **It is only when one experiences the whole world and all the souls in it as the first person singular that the real love, a love for 'not another'** (*ananya-bhakti*), **will be achieved.** Such Self-realization alone is the tap-root without which peace, love and happiness cannot thrive on earth. Therefore the sole and immediate need of the world is Self-enquiry, the medecine that destroys the evil ego. Only a true Knower of Self (*atma-jnani*) can really serve the world perfectly! The mere existence on earth of such a *Jnani* is sufficient to ensure the spiritual and moral welfare of the whole world.

When correctly understood, self-surrender is the surrender of the ego (*ahankara*) to God. Self-surrender and Self-enquiry are in fact one and the same, both in their result – the extinction of the ego –, and in their practice. Self-surrender is the path, that of devotion, for those who believe in God. How? Since in fact the individual 'I' and the world are properties belonging to God, to claim the body as 'I' and 'mine' is the great sin of stealing the property of God. If this attachment to the body is surrendered (to be accurate, restored) to God, the state of egolessness will be achieved. This state devoid of 'I' and 'mine' is the state of Self.

Though on superficial observation there may appear to be a difference between the path of enquiry and the path of devotion, namely that an aspirant on the path of enquiry attends to Self while an aspirant on the path of devotion attends to God, it will be clear to one who earnestly applies himself to practice that both are the same, not only in the result, namely to be established in Self by means of the destruction of the ego, but also in practice. A sincere

devotee who wants to surrender himself completely to God should refuse from the very start to continue taking the body as 'I' and 'mine'. If he again thinks 'I am the body' or 'this body is mine', he is committing the sin of *dattapaharam,* that is, taking back what has already been offered to God. Thus, the correct way of practising self-surrender is for him to be very vigilant that the thought 'I am the body' or 'this body is mine' does not rise in him again. Now, how does he do this? Does he not try to be very watchful within lest the first person – the feeling 'I am the body' – should rise again, that is, does he not try always to remain with a sharp attention fixed on the feeling 'I'? Hence, the same Self-attention which is going on in an enquirer is also going on in a devotee! Thus it is clear that an attention withdrawn from second and third persons and focused on 'I' is the correct and practical method of surrendering oneself to God. On the other hand, if a devotee seeks God outside himself, it will amount to being a second person attention. Since God ever shines as the reality of the first person, **attending to the first person is the right attention to God and this is the true path of devotion.**

The last days of the body of Sri Bhagavan were a clear mirror which showed the greatness of a *Jnani.* From the day He set foot in Tiruvannamalai, He did not move away even for a minute, but lived there continuously *for* fifty-four years. In 1949, a lump began to grow on the lower portion of His left upper arm. Though at first it seemed to be very small, after two operations it grew bigger and bigger, bleeding continuously and profusely, and proved to be a sarcoma. All kinds of treatment were tried, including radium application, but in vain. Even after the fourth operation, which was done on 19th December 1949, the disease was not cured. Though this operation was

a major one, Sri Bhagavan still refused to be given chloroform. When asked by a devotee whether there was any pain, Sri Bhagavan replied, "Even the pain is not apart from us!" Just as the teeth which bite our tongue are not other than us, and just as the thief who beat Sri Bhagavan was not viewed by Him as other than Himself, so also, even the disease which was ravaging His body was net other than He (Self). So wonder-inspiring was His *Jnana!*

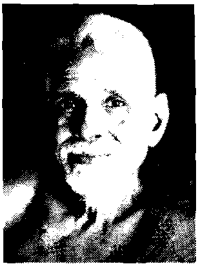
Even during the period of great torture caused by the disease, Sri Bhagavan was happily answering His devotees, and His replies were not only instructive but also full of humour, revealing thereby the sublimity of a *Jnani*. Thus He comforted the devotees whenever they were much worried about His health. He once remarked, "The body itself is a disease that has come upon us. If a disease attacks that original disease, is it not good for us?" To another devotee who was lamenting over His illness He said; "Oh, you are grieving as if your Swami were going away? Where to go? How to go? Going and coming is possible for the body, but how can it be possible for us?" On still another occasion He observed, "Just as the cow does not know whether the garland tied to its horns is still there or has been lost, and just as a drunken man does not know whether his dhoti is on his body or not, so also, a *Jnani* does not even know whether His body is still alive or dead."

According to the directions of Sri Bhagavan, no one was prevented from seeing Him till the very end. After His body had been seated in *padmasanam*, every breath went on steadily, and at 8.47 p.m. on Friday the 14th April 1950 Sri Bhagavan removed His human disguise and shone unveiled in His own nature as the Whole – the one infinite

space of Self, where there is no coming or going. At that moment, devotees on the temple veranda saw a bright light flash and engulf the small room where Sri Bhagavan was seated, but before they were able to conclude that it could have been a powerful photographic flash-light, others who were standing in the open exclaimed, "*Jyoti, jyoti* in the sky," for a brilliant meteor had **suddenly appeared in the sky; it moved northward towards Arunachalam and vanished behind the summit. Glory to Sri Ramana, the Light of Arunachalam!**

The sacred body of Bhagavan Sri Ramana was interred between the Hall where He had lived continuously for about twenty-eight years and Sri Matrubhuteswara temple. A *Sivalingam* was installed on His *Samadhi* and named **Sri Ramanalinga Murti**. A simple yet majestic temple was erected over it and was consecrated by *Kumbhabhishekam* on the 18th June 1967; later a large auditorium was added to it for conducting celebrations.

The Shrine of Grace (*sannidhi*) of **Sri Arunachalaramanan**, who by His life exemplified the truth 'I am not this body, I am the ever-existing Supreme Thing', is ever quenching the thirst of the world for *Jnana* with the nectar of Grace flowing in the form of Silence.



OM

Nama Bhagavate Sri Arunachalaramanaya

The Path of Sri Ramana

(Part One)

காப்பு – Invocation

ஆண்டா னளித்த வருளுபதே சப்பொருளை
யீண்டே விளக்கி யெழுதவருள்–வேண்டும்
வரைமேன் மறைமுனி வாக்கை வரையைங்
கரநின் கழலுதவிக் கா.

O Five-armed One (Lord Ganapati), are You not He who wrote on the Himalayas the words given by Vyasa, the great Rishi of the Vedas? I now beg for Your Grace so that I may write here a clear exposition of the heart of the divine Teaching (*upadesa*) revealed by my Guru (Sri Ramana). Do protect and guide me with Your helping Feet!

CHAPTER 1

Eternal Happiness is the Goal

The world progresses by intellect. All that is great in this world is just a manifestation of the intellect. What is the goal towards which the world is moving? What is the world striving for? Careful observation will show that all are striving **for happiness.** From the smallest ant to the greatest emperor, everyone is tirelessly working. For what? For happiness, and happiness alone! Everyone is anxious that he or she should live in happier circumstances than those at present. It is this anxiety which impels man to work. This craving for happiness is not wrong; it is indeed desirable! But since men are constantly endeavouring to obtain more happiness, it is evident that happiness in full has not yet been obtained. Man is constantly trying to accumulate such sources of pleasure as food, dress, house, employment, wife and children, because he believes that happiness will be derived from these sources.

But the happiness which man thus obtains is fleeting and impermanent. For a while there seems to be happiness, but then it fades away. It we analyse the various ways by which man obtains happiness, we will come to a general conclusion : the happiness sofar found by him is that which has been experiened through the five sense-organs, namely the eyes, ears, tongue, nose and skin. Thus, down

through the ages, human effort has been directed only towards acquiring objects for the satisfaction of these five senses.

When his eyes see pleasurable things, man derives happiness; when those things vanish, he becomes gloomy. When his ears hear pleasing music or words, man is happy; when those pleasurable sounds are denied him, he sinks into sorrow. Like sight and hearing, the sensations of touch, taste and smell are also experienced by man as either happiness or misery. Although these five senses seem to give happiness, they do not give it uninterruptedly.

By watching too many cinema shows, the eyes become impaired. Further, since the various other pleasing sights come to an end, it is impossible for man to watch them constantly. The same is the case with the happiness experienced through the sense of hearing. How long can a man listen to a concert? Either the concert will come to its natural end, or else the individual will have to leave the place on account of some other work. Thus there is an end to the happiness experienced through the sense of hearing. Similar is the case with the sense of smell; in fact, the continuous enjoyment of strong and pleasant odours may at length produce a headache or bleeding from the nose. Moreover, those things from which pleasant odours emanate lose them rapidly. We find the same to be true about the sense of taste. Can one stuff one's stomach beyond its capacity with even the tastiest dish? Beyond a certain limit the tongue finds even that tastiest dish repulsive. Hence, even taste does not give permament happiness. Let us now consider the sense of touch. When a silky-soft flower touches the body, there is a sensation of pleasure, but the

flower withers away rapidly. Moreover, after a while we become accustomed to the sensation and it ceases altogether to give us pleasure. The same is also true of a cool breeze and other such things. Hence, the pleasure experienced through the sense of touch also cannot be permanent. Therefore, the happiness acquired through anyone of these five senses cannot be enjoyed continuously; beyond a certain limit, they may actually become sources of pain instead of pleasure. Hence, the foregoing scrutiny can only lead us to the conclusion that the permanent and perfect happiness sought by man cannot be obtained through the five senses.

It is certain that everyone wants happiness in full, untainted by even an iota of sorrow. This can in no way be denied. However, no one has so far been able to obtain such happiness by gratifying the five senses. It is thus quite clear that up till now perfect happiness has not been obtained in spite of all the world's progress and endeavours through the above-mentioned means. Yet, is such perfect happiness impossible? No! One can have it here and now. There is nothing wrong in all living beings aspiring for perennial and full happiness, untainted by sorrow. **The desire for happiness is not wrong! Happiness must be obtained! It is in fact the Supreme goal** (*purushartha*) **for all human beings!** But the means to obtain it which have been charted and followed by people up till now are wrong. The defect is only in the means and not in the goal. That is why man is not able to enjoy perfect happiness despite the herculean efforts he has made to achieve it.

The paths leading people to the perfect happiness which is desired by one and all are the religions that have come into existence on earth. Religion (*mata*) is the

principle or path found by mind (*mati*)[13]. The purpose of all religions is to show mankind the best means for achieving perfect happiness. But unfortunately now–a–days, though various religions point out their own distinct roads towards this great objective, every man – regardless of his religion – is stopped on the way and is prevented from obtaining happiness on account of religious bigotry and also of not knowing the true significance of religious tenets.

> "With true love and faith, follow that religion in which you have belief and turn within; do not jump outwards, criticizing and arguing against other religions on account of bigotry for your own religion."
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'*, verse 991

At this juncture mankind needs a proper guide. Such guides, the Great Ones, are generally called by people *Avatarapurushas,* that is, God in human form. They are those who have achieved and are well settled in that perfect happiness which is the goal of mankind. They ever remain effortlessly in that blissful state, and also help others to obtain it. Among those *Jnana-Gurus,* the most recent one is **Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi**, who lived as the world Guru (*jagat* guru) on the southern slope of **Arunachalam**, the sacred Hill. What did Sri Ramana Bhagavan teach the world? What is the supreme benefit which mankind can derive from His Teaching? Let us see.

What is the ultimate objective for which man, by means of his intellect, has been ceaselessly working in different fields of endeavour throughout so many ages? Is it not for happiness? It is to achieve this very end that Sri

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13 "Religion (*mata*) can exist only so long as mind (*mati*) exists..."
'Guru Vachaka Kovai,' verse 993

Bhagavan has shown us a direct path which is His own unique discovery, and which is at the same time the quintessence of all the paths paved by those Great Ones who came before Him. It will be found at the end of this research how His Teaching is the direct path, like the hypotenuse of a right-angled triangle, and an easy one to follow.

Now, who is fit to follow this path to bliss which Sri Bhagavan has shown? Are the brahmins alone fit to follow It? Or are Hindus alone qualified to follow it? Is Bhagavan Sri Ramana a Guru for Hindus only? Does He propagate a particular religious faith which is already in the world, or is it an altogether new religion? Such questions may arise in the mind of the reader.

The path of Sri Ramana is meant for anyone who craves for happiness. Is there anyone in the world who does not want happiness? Even one who denies the existence of God will not admit that he does not want happiness. Therefore, **an atheist can also obtain perfect happiness through the path of Sri Ramana.** No human being is excluded from this path. Sri Ramana is not a preacher of any religion; He belongs to no religion or country! Since He shows the way to perfect bliss, which is the common aim of the whole world, He is the *Jagat Guru*[14]. And since, unbound by the tenets and traditions of any religion, He teaches one and all the path to obtain the common aim,

14 *Jagat Guru* : For ancient India, the limit of the world was India itself; therefore a *Jagat Guru*, i.e. world Guru, though named so, was the Guru who taught in India only, and that too, He who taught to a limited society. Unlike those Great Ones, whose teachings were confined to a few, Bhagavan Sri Ramana truly teaches the whole world without any social or cultural restrictions, and is therefore called the *Loka Maha Guru* or the Guru for the whole universe.

bliss eternal. **He is indeed the Loka Maha Guru –** the Guru for the whole world! People of all religions have come to Him and have been benefited. Moreover, no matter to which religion one belongs, one feels in one's heart, "Sri Ramana is the Guru of my own religion!", and has devotion to Him. Therefore, let us see what is the path of Sri Ramana.

CHAPTER 2

What is Happiness?

'O Man, do you want happiness? Are you working for it? Or do you atleast have the desire to find a path through which you can direct your efforts? Then you are fortunate! Here is a method for your consideration. After scrutinizing it, see if you are convinced that everlasting happiness can be obtained through this way. If this method appeals to you as sound, follow it. Put forth your best efforts and enjoy in full the fruit of your toil. Listen to this exposition of the unique path to perennial bliss, which clears all the doubts that have been created in your mind by the various scriptures' – so sounds the divine horn-of-knowledge (*jnanamurasu*) of Bhagavan Sri Ramana to the world.

> "Listen my dear maiden! The *Sadguru* who, because of His divine compassion, came on earth in the human form of Sri Ramana is standing on the holy Hill Annamalai (Arunachalam) and is sounding His divine horn-of-knowledge so loudly that even the heavens tremble and the real Eye of all the people on earth opens! With this Verse! wake you up so that you may know that He is protecting us from pitfalls and has taken us as His own. Therefore wake up and see, and drink the

nectar of His Grace: wake up my child, never to sleep again."

'Sri Ramana Embavai'. verse 6[15]

O Man who is ceaselessly craving and toiling for happiness, crying, "Happiness! Happiness! I want happiness!", do you atleast know what happiness is? On many occasions in your life you have experienced happiness in various forms, have you not? Now then, can you tell me what happiness is? Those experiences through the senses that are agreeable to your mind you term as happiness, and disagreeable ones as misery, do you not? **This idea of yours about happiness and misery is wrong!**

That is why all the methods through which you have tried to obtain happiness and avoid misery have come to naught. Because the method was wrong, happiness untainted by misery has never been within your reach! Since we say that your idea of happiness and misery is wrong, is it not necessary first to explain why it is wrong, and then to determine what happiness really is? Now listen.

According to your idea, you should be happy when, the objects for the satisfaction of the five senses are obtained, and miserable when they are not. But see, you are happy in your dreamless sleep. Not even a single experience through any of the five senses is present there, yet sleep is blissful to one and all! According to you, there ought to be only misery when the five senses are not working – but in fact it is not so. Contrary to your belief, there is happiness when the five senses are not working, that is, in the absence of body-consiousness! How do you account for this? You

15 *Embavai:* 'Embavai' is a poetic metre in Tamil; by tradition, Saints sing songs of twenty verses in this metre, taking the standpoint of a lady waking up a young girl to take her bath before worshipping God.

have to admit that happiness can be experienced even without the help of the five senses.

Moreover, a man or woman who has heaped all those objects which satisfy the five senses, such as wealth, fine houses, clothes, tasty food, an agreeable wife or husband, children and relatives – which alone are the means for gaining happiness according to your idea – must be the happiest person in the world, while one who has none or few of these must be miserable. However, when we see the world, it is not so. Even the richest man has his own miseries! Sometimes he cannot even have a good night's sleep. 'The thicker the finger, the greater the swelling! In contrast to this, you find that the penniless labourer who toils all day long, eats but a morsel in the night and later lies on the hard pavement, enjoys a sound sleep free of all worries. There is still a more important point to be noted here. In deep sleep, even the rich man is totally dissociated from his external sources of pleasure, and despite this dissociation he is quite happy. Therefore you must accept the fact that happiness is something which can shine even without the aid of the five senses. Furthermore, as happiness is experienced by you in deep sleep, where there is neither body-consciousness nor awareness of the world, it follows that happiness must be within you, and not outside. Now you clearly know that you were wrong all along in thinking that happiness comes from external objects. Every object in this world – including your own body – is extraneous to you, and that is why they are forgotten in deep sleep. Yet, since everyone experiences perfect happiness in that state, the only possible conclusion is that happiness does lie within you. The truth is that **you yourself are happiness! Happiness is your true nature! You are not this body-form! You are full and perfect bliss itself!!**

We can reach this same conclusion through another way also. Listen.

Do you not like innumerable things? Just analyse each and every thing which is dear to you. When you do, you will find that you love only those things from which you think you **get happiness. Where there is happiness, there there is love! This is the universal law, a law which has no exception!!** Now, in order to proceed according to this law, tell me which thing you love most. You will have to admit that you truly love yourself best, far more than you love your friends, relatives, wife or husband, children, father, mother, riches, and so on! You love them because you think that they contribute to your own happiness. If anything happens proving to you that they give happiness **to someone else,** instead of to yourself, your love for them will at once vanish! Therefore, it is clear that you love other things only because you love yourself!

We hear some people saying: "My love is not for myself; I work in this world not for my own happiness but for the welfare of other people. In fact, I live for others. To care only for my own happiness is selfishness – that is not my aim. My aim is the happiness of others". This is superficial talk, betraying a lack of sincere and serious analysis! People do not realize that every so-called selfless act which they do brings happiness only to themselves! Let us take the example of a man who is prepared to undergo, throughout his lifetime, all kinds of sufferings for his son just to maintain, educate, and keep him above needs and wants; in doing so it is he alone who gets satisfaction from seeing the prosperity of his son. He worked for this satisfaction alone. **Is not this satisfaction his own? Is not this self-satisfaction the driving force behind all his so-called selfless work?**

The former American President Abraham Lincoln once saved a pig by lifting it out of the mire in which it was caught, and while doing so his body and clothes became very dirty. The onlookers asked him why he, the president of such a vast country, should dirty himself just to save a common pig. He replied : "I got involved in this action not so much to relieve the suffering of the pig, but to relieve myself from the suffering I experienced at the sight of the pig, I did this only for my own peace of mind!" What Lincoln said then is the practical truth of the matter. **It is only this self-satisfaction – one's own happiness–which is the hidden motive behind all kinds of selfless acts! This can in no way be denied.**

Just as the sacrifice made for the sake of 'my' children and 'my' relatives turns out to be selfishness because it is caused by the love towards oneself, so the love towards 'my own' country (*desabhimana*) and the love towards 'my own' language (*bhashabhimana*) also turn out, in an indirect way, to be mere selfishness because they are rooted in the love towards one's body as 'I' (*dehabhimana*). What must be noted here is the 'I' which is inherent in the 'mine'. He who rises saying, "I will sacrifice even my life so that my language may flourish", does so on account of his love towards himself. In the same manner, since even he who sacrifices his life for the sake of his country is aiming only for his own satisfaction, he also does so on account of self-love. There are some who boast of their broad internationalism in contrast to narrow nationalism. They may say: "I am not so selfish as to be concerned only for 'my' country' or 'my' home; I want the whole world to be happy. My aim is not the benefit of any particular language or country; is this not unselfishness?" Yet even this belongs to the same category! This man also gets peace only when

he sees the whole world in peace, and thus what he desires is his own peace or happiness! It is therefore clear that even this hero of so-called unselfishness has love for his own self! **This indeed is self-love.**[16] **Therefore, the law that everyone loves himself most is irrefutable!** Thus, you have to conclude that, of all things, the dearest to you is yourself. According to these two conclusions: (1) that you are your dearest of all, and (2) that love can spring forth only towards happiness, it is clear that **you must be eternal happiness** (*paramasukham*) itself. Where there is happiness, there is love; since you love yourself best, **you are eternal happiness itself.** Thus, do we not once again come to the same conclusion?

It is this happiness, your own nature, that was experienced by you in deep sleep! The reason for your

16 By our saying so, let not the reader come to the wrong conclusion that we support a vice – selfishness. Till now the word 'selfishness' has been wrongly used by people to denote a vice. Since the word 'self' has been wrongly used to denote the body, selfishness has been considered to be a vice. But for the Self-realized One (*atma-jnani*) the true import of the word 'self' is an experience in which the whole universe is known to be 'I'. If we take His experience as the right verdict, it will be clear that 'selfishness' is not a vice.

That is, the correct definition of selflessness (altruism), which has been glorified by people throughout the ages, is only the 'selfishness' of a *Jnani*, who knows everything to be Himself. Only the *Atma-jnani* is truly unselfish! Of the three aspects, existence-consciousness-bliss (*sat-chit-ananda* or *asti-bhati-priyam*), which is our true nature, the bliss aspect shines in everyone as the love for Self (*swatma-priyam*): therefore there is no wonder in Self-love, nor any wrong. But knowing Self, the unlimited form of bliss, as a limited form, the small body, alone is the great wrong. That is why 'selfishness' has been considered to be a vice. This scrutiny is made here only to prove that Self-love (*swatma-priyam*) is the supreme truth. To enlarge upon this subject would lead to too great an expansion of this book and hence it will be dealt with in *'The Path of Sri Ramana – Part Two'*, where the opinion of Sri Bhagavan about 'service to the world' (*loka-seva*) and 'unselfish action' (*nishkamya karma*) *will* be explained.

happiness in deep sleep – even without the aid of your mind and its instruments, the five senses – is that **happiness is your real nature**; in fact **you yourself are happiness!!**

Here you may ask, "Are not the experiences gained during the waking state, through the five senses, happiness?" Scrutinize more deeply. You should investigate with a keen attention each one of your pleasurable experiences as to what changes take place within you at that time.

Let us take an example. Suppose you want to eat a sweetmeat; as soon as this thought arises in you, you start working to acquire all the necessary ingredients for making that sweetmeat. You prepare it and start eating it. Now, happiness is experienced. If you analyse how this happiness is obtained, that is, if you watch the feeling of happiness that rises within you while eating, you will find that the thought-waves which had risen out of the desire for the sweetmeat – "I want a sweetmeat" – and which had been raging so far cease. Now the thought-waves cease, but only for a while; hence the happiness is also experienced only for a while. When the sweetmeat has been eaten, the thought-waves rise up again, and so the happiness disappears.

Some may argue : "A sweetmeat is sweet; that is why it gives happiness, and not because of the cessation of thoughts. The reason for the happiness is the sweetness in the sweetmeat". But this is wrong; it is a conclusion lacking sufficient analysis. Let us see how.

The tongue, the organ of taste, can only discern which thing has what taste: sugarcandy is sweet, neem is bitter, tamarind is sour, salt is salty, and so on. But it is only the mind that decides likes and dislikes: "I want this taste and not that one". Though a thing is bitter, if the mind wants it,

it will derive happiness even in that bitterness. Are there not some people who hate sweets and have a peculiar craving for bitter things? In the same manner are there not some who relish dried fish, while others will run miles to escape from the very smell of it? Moreover, though one is eating the tastiest and choicest dish in the world, one's mind may be so engrossed at that time in some other thoughts that it is unable to create thoughts of desire for that tasty food, and consequently one is unable either to know its taste or to derive happiness from it. Similarly, when the mind is centred elsewhere, one can eat even a tasteless dish without aversion. Further, when one is hungry and the desire for food is strong, one eats and happily relishes even the worst and most tasteless preparation. What can we infer from all this? **It is not the taste but only the thought-waves of the mind, in the form of likes and dislikes, which account for one's happiness and misery.**

> "When the fire of a ravenous hunger is raging, even a stale gruel or a sour soup of wild-rice flour will be relished as the best dish in the world. Therefore, it is not the nature of the sense-object, but only the desire for it, which is the cause of happiness."
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Kovai,'* verse 583

Thus, **if the thought-wave** that rises **is one of dislike for a thing** of a particular taste, **the removal of that thing will calm down the thought-wave** and thus the mind will subside; hence **happiness,** which is your real nature, **is then revealed. If the thought-wave is one of a liking for a thing** of a particular taste, **when you get that thing the thought-wave will calm down** and the mind will subside; hence **here again happiness is revealed.** Therefore, it will be clear to

those who keenly observe that happiness is experienced only by quietening the thoughts which rise again and again. It does not matter whether a thing is sweet or bitter. **The rising of thought-waves** in the form of likes and dislikes for things **alone is sorrow, and their subsidence alone is happiness; that is all!**

Eating a sweetmeat concerns only the sense of taste. The same process described above also takes place in the case of the other four senses: touch, sight, smell and hearing. In deep sleep too, thoughts become quiescent temporarily, hence happiness is experienced. Waking is the rising of thoughts, that is, the rising of the first thought, 'I am this body'. When waking comes, the happiness of deep sleep vanishes. What is to be inferred from this? Thoughts are the enemy of happiness! Happiness reigns when thoughts subside! In fact, thoughts are the veil that covers over the happiness; when this veil is removed, happiness is revealed. **Since you yourself are happiness, all you have to do to enjoy your own innate happiness is to ward off all thoughts.** So, understand this truth that the happiness enjoyed by you in deep sleep on account of its thought-free nature can also be enjoyed in a thought-free waking state.

The mind runs outwards because of the ignorant outlook that happiness is derived from external objects. If the mind is thoroughly and firmly convinced, through the above scrutiny, that happiness is within and that one's real nature is itself happiness, it will not then run outwards but towards oneself; in other words, it will remain still in Self. **This knowledge is sine-qua-non for effectively controlling the mind.**

When you eat a sweetmeat, the thought-wave in the form of a liking for it subsides and you enjoy the happiness

already within you. Is it not so? However, not understanding that you enjoy only that happiness which is already within you, you delude yourself in thinking that it comes from the sweetmeat! That is why you make repeated efforts to acquire and eat more and more sweetmeats! But beyond a certain limit, sweetmeats become like poison, upsetting your stomach and making you sick. The same is the case with the other four sense-pleasures. Listen to this story.

A dog went to the cremation ground. It picked up a sharp piece of bone from which the flesh had been completely burnt off and started munching it. The sharp edges of the bone pierced the dog's mouth in many places and there was bleeding. The dog dropped it, but seeing blood smeared all over it, it thought that the blood was coming from the bone because of its ravenous munching. It licked the blood and again started chewing the bone even more ravenously, with the result that there were more wounds in its mouth and more bleeding. The foolish dog went on repeating this process of dropping the bone, licking the blood and again chewing the bone. Little did that foolish dog realize that in fact the blood came from its own mouth and not from the bone!

"A foolish dog picked up a bone,
Bereft of flesh because 'twas burnt,
Masticated many a round
Till its mouth was filled with wounds,
Licked end praised the blood, its own,
'No thing on earth equals this bone',

'Guru Vachaka Kovai', verse 585

Similarly, when a man enjoys external objects, he only experiences a little of the happiness that is already within

him. But, on account of ignorance, he thinks that the happiness comes from the external objects, and thus he behaves like the dog in the story. Exactly like the dog that munched the bone again and again, throughout his life man repeatedly searches for and accumulates external objects. What is the result of all this? Alas ! Untold heaps of misery, with a few iotas of pleasure in between – that is all! **Indeed, all this is ignorance, otherwise called maya!**

All the researches and efforts of mankind, from the stone age to the modern atomic age, in different fields of endeavour, be they intellectual, scientific or social – are they not all similar to the efforts of the dog which untiringly munches the bone? **Do not feel offended by this statement, which may seem to be a sweeping one, for when told without reserve, this is the plain truth!** Tell me, what indeed has mankind done in the name of progress so far, other than improving and accumulating external objects for the satisfaction of the five senses? **All the aforesaid human efforts are based upon nothing but the wrong assumption that happiness comes from external objects.** Is there any difference between the dog which thinks that more blood will come out of the dry bone the more it is munched, and the man who thinks that humanity will be made increasingly happy by accumulating more and more external objects through the improvements of scientific and industrial progress? Certainly not!

Thus, not knowing the right path for obtaining everlasting happiness, humanity has gone too far and is racing still further in the wrong direction! There is no wrong in man's love for happiness. It is his birthright. It is in fact the birthright of all living beings. Thus happiness should be obtained and should never be suppressed! But do

not toil to achieve objects of worldly pleasure, which give only an iota of fleeting happiness. Direct all your efforts only to towards obtaining happiness in full. By desiring petty external objects you get only a transient and limited happiness. Therefore, **be not a person of petty desire! Be a person of full desire!** Until perfect happiness is obtained, do not give up your efforts. Know the way to experience always and uninterruptedly that **happiness** (*ananda*) which is you, and which **exists** (*sat*) and **shines** (*chit*) within you as your real nature. This is the goal supreme (*purushartha*), the very purpose for which you were born.

CHAPTER

Self-enquiry is the Only Way to Happiness

From what has been said, it follows that 'I am' (Self) is happiness. Now then, how are we to obtain that happiness? Further, how to enjoy it permanently? **Where thoughts cease, happiness reigns supreme; such is the truth about happiness.** Although the thought-free state is gained and happiness is experienced for a while, such a thought-free state obtained by contact with external objects does not last long. Therefore, it is clear that one can never achieve the thought-free happy state permanently with the help of the five senses.

Have we not already seen that deep sleep is a happy state? So, is this deep sleep after all the goal of mankind? It cannot be, because it is also short-lived and its happiness is interrupted by the waking state that follows in its trail. No one can go on sleeping for ever. One's accumulated tendencies (*vasanas*) in the form of thoughts will rouse one from sleep. The mind, in association with the body, works without stop all day long. At the end of such a hard day's work, it (the mind) needs rest simply to be able to start afresh and work again! That is why the mind, which is a collective name for thoughts; subsides of its own accord in deep sleep. The mind which now takes rest temporarily cannot but enthusiastically jump out again into activity! If

on his way home a man is caught in a downpour and takes shelter under the portico of some house, it does not mean that he will remain there permanently. When the shower is over, he will surely move on. Similarly, the mind gets a little rest – it sleeps. The state of activity in which it comes out again may be called either waking or dream. Thus, no one can remain in sleep for ever, and so even sleep is only a temporary happiness. This state which is called sleep[17] and which is a state between two *vrittis*, that is, two thoughts or two active states of mind, has still another defect. During sleep the mind-knowledge subsides in darkness and does not know its original light (*sat-chit*, existence-consciousness), whereas it should be made to merge without losing hold of its consciousness. Therefore, sleep is not a state of perfect happiness, free from defects. Then what is the way to experience such happiness? Let us turn to the words of Sri Bhagavan:

> "Absorption (of mind) is of two kinds: *laya* (temporary stillness) and *nasa* (permanent destruction). That which is absorbed merely in *laya* will rise again, (but) if its form dies (in *nasa)*, it will not rise again,"
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 13

There are two kinds of absorption of mind. If the absorption is temporary, it is called **'mano-laya'**, that is mental quiescence; if the mind is absorbed in *laya,* it will rise up again in due course. The second kind of absorption is **'mano-nasa'**, that is, destruction of the mind; in this kind of absorption the mind dies, and under no circumstances

17 'Sleep' is generally considered by all as a mean state, but the real nature of sleep as revealed by Sri Bhagavan, whose experience is the final authority is totally different. It is given in the eighth chapter of this book, but for the time being let us proceed on the assumption of ordinary people that sleep is a defective and mean state.

will it revive. Since it is dead, it can no longer give rise to misery. Therefore, the happiness obtained through the second kind of absorption, the destruction of the mind, is eternal. It is the supreme bliss.

In the waking state when we enjoy agreeable experiences through the five senses, there is quiescence of the mind for an extremely short period of time. In sleep the period of the mind's quiescence is a little longer[18]. In death also the mind is likewise quiescent only. All these are only quiescence of the mind (*mano-laya*) and not the destruction of the mind (*mano-nasa*). It is not enough if misery (i.e. mind) is temporarily absorbed, it must be destroyed. This is the goal of mankind. **Temporary quiescence** (*laya*) **of the mind is temporary quiescence of misery, and permanent destruction** (*nasa*) **of the mind is permanent destruction of misery; that is, the mind itself is misery!** Hence, let us find out what is to be done to destroy the mind.

What is mind? The verdict given by Sri Bhagavan is:

"The mind is only thoughts..."

'Upadesa Undhiyar,' verse 18

If we give up all thoughts and observe what is mind, we will find that there is no such thing as 'mind' at all.

> "If one enquires–without inadvertence (*pramada*) – into the form of the mind, it will be found that there is no such thing as mind! This is the direct path for all!"

'Upadesa Undhiyar', verse 17

18 Though we now have to say 'longer', in fact 'long' and 'short' cannot stand up to rigid scrutiny, because time itself is a mental conception (refer to *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'*, verse 560).

For destroying the mind it is enough if thoughts are destroyed. Let us therefore find out what thoughts actually are. This scrutiny is not an idle way of passing time. Is not the entire world struggling for happiness? Even this scrutiny is undertaken in view of obtaining that same happiness. Then what is the difference between the efforts of humanity in general and this effort undertaken by a spiritual aspirant? The efforts of worldly people lead only to a fleeting semblance of happiness, whereas this effort of an aspirant – Self-enquiry – paves the path to perfect, eternal and unlimited happiness. **Therefore, this research is far more important and worthy than all other kinds of human endeavour!** Throughout this scrutiny, one must be very vigilant and put forth one's very best efforts. Only then will the result of one's enquiry – the supreme gain of life – be obtained here and now. This is a truth well proved by Bhagavan Sri Ramana's own experience!

Did we not begin with a proposal to scrutinize thoughts? For what reason? The aim is to destroy all thoughts and thereby to enjoy perfect happiness. Millions of thoughts rise in us, out of which we must search for and discover the first and root thought. When we do so, we will find that the first person thought, 'I am this body', which rises as soon as one wakes up from sleep, is the first thought. This 'I'-thought is the root of all thoughts.

> "The mind is only thoughts. Of all thoughts, the thought 'I' is indeed the root-thought. Therefore, what is called mind is only the thought 'I' (i.e. the feeling 'I am the body')."
>
> '*Upadesa Undhiyar*, verse 18

Of the three persons – the first person (I), the second person (you) and the third person (he, she, it, etc.) – 'I', the

first person, is the first to rise. If the first person does not rise, the second and third persons will not come into existence. The first person is nothing but the thought 'I', and this alone is mind. The second and third persons will rise only after the rising of the first person, 'I'. The world is nothing but second and third persons. In sleep the first person feeling, 'I am the body', does not exist; that is why the world (the second and third persons) does not exist there.

> "Only if that first person (the ego) in the form 'I am the body' exists, will the second and third persons also exist..."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*. verse 14

> "If there is no 'I'-thought, no other thing will exist..."
>
> *'Sri Arunachala Ashtakam'*, verse 7

If the 'I'-thought – the root of all thoughts – is prevented from rising, all other thoughts will also be prevented. If a man wants to cut down the millions of leaves and hundreds of branches of a tree, is it not enough if he cuts down the trunk? Similarly, a man who is trying to destroy all the millions and millions of thoughts will have succeeded in doing so if he destroys the 'I'-thought, their root. Did we not start with the objective of scrutinizing thoughts? From what we have seen above, it is now clear that **it is not necessary to scrutinize each and every thought, and that a scrutiny of only the 'I'-thought, the root of all thoughts, is quite sufficient.**

Some may ask, "Will not happiness be obtained through the destruction of thoughts? If so, why should any thought be scrutinized? Is it not futile?" They may even quote Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who once said (in

'*Who am I?*'), "It is useless to scrutinize the garbage, all of which is to be thrown away in one stroke". Such an ill-fitting question would be due to an improper understanding of Sri Bhagavan's teachings. Let us see how. What Sri Bhagavan said is: "It is futile to scrutinize the various properties of all the principles [second and third persons-non-Self] which are veiling Self". No matter how much we scrutinize thoughts pertaining to second and third persons, they will never subside but will only increase. He has never said that the scrutiny of the first person (i.e. Self-enquiry) should be given up! **The first person thought, 'I', has this peculiar property: if** (by enquiring 'Who am I?') **attention is focused on it in order to discover what it is, this 'I' thought will subside.** But on the contrary, the more we attend to thoughts pertaining to the second and third persons, the more they will increase. In a cinema theatre, the further the screen is moved from the projector, the bigger the pictures become; and the closer the screen is moved towards the projector, the source of light, the smaller the pictures become, even to the size of a mere dot. Similarly, the more the attention of the mind is directed towards second and third persons, the more the world-pictures (i.e. thoughts) are multiplied; but if the attention is turned towards Self, the source of the mind's light, the mind (i.e. the first thought, 'I') itself will subside. We shall see into this more deeply in chapter eight, 'The Technique of Self-Enquiry'.

> "The thought 'I am this body of flesh and blood' is the one thread on which are strung the various other thoughts. Therefore if we turn inwards, 'Where is this I?', all thoughts [including the 'I'-thought] will come to an end and Self-knowledge will then spontaneously shine forth within the cave (the heart) as 'I-I' ..."

'Atmavidya Kirtanam', verse 2

Just as all the beads of a rosary fall down when the thread is cut, so also if we who want to destroy all thoughts scrutinize the first parson thought, 'I', which runs through and sustains all the second and third person thoughts like the thread through the beads, all of them will be effortlessly destroyed.

> "... When the first person ceases to exit through one's enquiry into the truth of that first person, then the existence of the second and third persons will come to an end ...."
>
> '*Ulladhu Narpadhu*', verse 14

Thus, the method of destroying the 'I'-thought is also the method which will destroy all other thoughts. **Therefore, what is essential is to destroy the first person thought, 'I'. The only way to destroy it is to scrutinize its nature! There is no other way!!**

> "...How else to attain that state wherein 'I' (the ego) does not rise – the state of egolessness – unless we seek the source whence 'I' rises?..."
>
> '*Ulladu Narpadhu*', verse 27

Even in the path of self-surrrender, which is the path of devotion *(bhakti)*, the destruction of the first person, the thought 'I', is achieved by surrendering it to God, having come to know the worthlessness of its nature (either by knowing that the ego-'I' is non-existent, or by knowing that Self, the real 'I', is the sole existence). Thus, all that is necessary is to enquire into the first person 'I'-thought alone. We shall see in chapter seven, 'Self-Enquiry', how it is destroyed by means of enquiry.

CHAPTER 4

Who Am I?

What is this 'I'? In other words. 'Who am I?'. Do we not all generally say 'I... I...'? What do we refer to when we say so? If we are asked what we mean when we say the word 'I', we shall have to admit that we have not yet found the correct answer to this question! Why? Because whenever we say 'I', we refer only to our body. Is not a name given to the body? We generally take that name as the name of that particular person. If that person is asked, 'Who are you?", he replies, "I am Rama". If someone calls, "Rama", only that person looks back. Since other bodies have other names, only this body is to be taken as Rama. Therefore the name denotes the body. Because he believes that he is, the body, he feels that he is Rama and no one else. Are there not many more occasions in which we behave as if we were only this body? Therefore, it is clear that each one of us is convinced that the body is 'I'.

But if we approach a person, point out his hand and ask, "What is this?", quick comes his reply, "This is my hand". Similarly, when we ask about each part of his body, he says, "This is my leg, this is my stomach, this is my chest, this is my back, this is my head", and so on and so forth. Thus, he will ultimately have admitted, "This whole body is mine". When he says that it is his body, it now

becomes evident that the body is just a possession of his that is, that he is the possessor of a possession, the body. If so, can he be the body, his possession? Is he not the possessor of it? If he is further questioned, "If this body is only your possession, who are you, its possessor? Can you be this body? Can a possession be its own possessor?", he now admits that he is not the body, but that the body is merely his possession.

The same person who, a short while ago when addressed by the name of his body, claimed, "I am indeed this body", now himself admits, "I am not this body, it is only my possession". In the same manner he also refers to his mind, "My thoughts are like this – my mind is like that." Therefore, how can he be either the mind or the body, which are only his possessions? What do we learn from all this? **No one yet knows what he really is**! Man, who is still in doubt – being unable to know what he really is, even though he is the nearest and dearest to himself –, is trying hard to know so many far-away things in the world. Nothing could be more ridiculous! When even the knowledge of his own self is full of confusion and unsolved doubts, is there any wonder that his knowledge about various other things (world and God), acquired by the mind through study, hearing and experience, is also riddled with doubts? How can a man who does not know even the colour of the glasses he is wearing decide the correct colour of other things by looking through those coloured glasses? Similarly, however learned, rich or powerful he may be, **if a man has no clear knowledge of what he really is, all his learning, greatness and power are merely fictitious! Hence, the first lesson to be learnt is about one's own self.** Let us therefore pursue the enquiry 'Who am I?'.

Although some people will accept from the scrutiny made above that they cannot be this insentient body, yet, since they are not able to know correctly the true nature of 'I', they still think that 'I' is the sum total of the body, the five senses, mind and breath (*prana*[19]). Therefore we must clearly know what this 'I' is, without the slightest doubt or wrong identification, that is, without mistaking one thing to be another. It is not enough if one accepts that one is not the body, a mere mass of flesh. By observing the processes of breathing and blood circulation, which continue even though the body is lying down quietly, some may think that the *prana* is perhaps 'I'. Is there any test that we can use to determine a particular thing as 'not I'? Yes, there is! **The test is to find out, 'Do we exist or not in the absence of that particular thing?'!** By using this test, we can proceed successfully to the very end of our enquiry.

The wrong identification 'I am the body' is itself all of these : mind (*manas*), intellect (*buddhi*), the storehouse of tendencies (*chittam*), ego (*ahankara*), wrong knowledge (*ajnana*), nescience (*sunya*), *maya*, and so on. The *prana* is a gross form of this mind, and so is the physical body! Even the mind is a body, but a subtle one; *prana* is a little grosser than mind; and the body of flesh and blood is still grosser than the *prana;* The subtle mind in its subtler form is itself the tendencies (*vasanas*) or the darkness of ignorance. Let us classify all these forms of the mind into three categories, namely the gross, subtle and causal bodies.[20] All the gross forms – the body, blood circulation and respiration – which are cognized by the mind through the five senses constitute

19 The word *prana* does not only mean the breathing process in the lungs, but it also includes the complete metabolism in the body.

20 The five sheaths (*kosas*) are classified into these three bodies (*sariras*) as follows : 1) the physical body that grows from food (*annamaya*

the gross body; this is because all these are clearly cognized by the mind, the subtle body, which is the second in our classification. Though the sastras usually include *pranamaya kosa* in the category of subtle body, we have here included it in the category of gross body because it is clearly perceived by the mind as an object other than the mind, and since this will help us a great deal in applying our test. Moreover, since all these five sheaths are finally to be discarded as 'not I' (non-Self), no man with a little common sense will object to its being included with either of those two bodies[21]. Now, by using the simple test mentioned above, let us see if we are this gross body.

In deep sleep, we are not conscious of this gross body. What do we infer from this? Is it not obvious that we can exist without this mass of flesh? Some used to argue with Sri Bhagavan : "The body does not cease to exist in deep sleep. Although in deep sleep a man may not be conscious of the existence of the body, nor of the movements of the breath and blood circulation in it, yet these are perceived by others who are awake". But the verdict of Sri Bhagavan,

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kosa) and the breath or prana (pranamaya kosa) form the the gross body (*sthula sarira*); 2) the mind (*manomaya kosa*) and the intellect or *buddhi* (*vijnanamaya kosa*) form the subtle body (*sukshma sarira*); and 3) the nothingness of sleep where happiness prevails (*anandamaya kosa*) forms the causal body (*karana sarira*). The following verse may be noted here :

> "The body is a form of five sheaths. So the term 'body' includes all the five sheaths. Does the world exist apart from the *body*'? Say, is there anyone who without the body has seen the world?'
>
> *Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 5

21 This is what Sri Bhagavan actually meant when He said in '*Who am I?*', "It is useless to scrutinize (or to argue about the classification of) the garbage, all of which is to be thrown away in one stroke".

the Truth-knower (*mahanubhavi*), is quite contrary to this. According to Him, "In deep sleep the body and the world do not exist, yet one's own existence, 'I am', is experienced by one and all". The picture, that is, the body and world, rises only when the mind rises, exists only so long as the mind exists, and vanishes when the mind sets; therefore, is there a world apart from the mind?[22] Since the microcosm is the macrocosm, the body is the world. Without the body, the world does not exist. All that exists as the world is projected from the body. That is why Sri Bhagavan asks (in verse 5 of *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*) : "Is there anyone who without the body has seen the world?". In short, the contention of worldly people (*ajnanis*) is, 'The body and world do exist in sleep, whereas the consciousness 'I' does not exist there'. But Sri Bhagavan's verdict is quite the contrary : 'The body and world do not exist in deep sleep, whereas the consciousness 'I am' is experienced by all'. Now, does the body really exist in deep sleep? For if the body exists in deep sleep, the world must also exist there[23]. Since the body cannot exist unless the mind rises, how can it exist in deep sleep, where the mind does not rise? And since the body does not exist in deep sleep, how then can the world exist there? Therefore, let us try to understand Sri

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22. "The five kinds of sense-knowledge, and nothing else, constitute the form of the world we see. The five kinds of sense-knowledge are obtained through the five sense-organs. Since the one mind perceives the world through the five sense-organs, say, can there be a world apart from the mind?"

'Ulladhu Narpadhu', verse 6

23. "The world does not exist apart from the body; the body does not exist apart from the mind; the mind does not exist apart from consciousness, and consciousness does not exist apart from Self, which is existence,"

'Guru Vachaka Kovai', verse 99

Bhagavan's verdict that the body and world do not exist in deep sleep.

If we say that a thing exists, that existence must be coupled with consciousness, that is, it should itself know its own existence. It should not need the evidence or help of any other thing either to know its existence or to prove its existence. For, existence and the knowledge of existing (that is, existence and consciousness, *sat* and *chit*) are not two different things.

> "To know existence *(sat)*, there is no consciousness *(chit)* other than existence itself; existence is therefore consciousness. . ."
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 23

Thus, consciousness without existence is not at all consciousness; likewise, existence without consciousness is not at all existence. The knowledge that we slept is the evidence of our existence at that time. Do we have to ask others to know whether we slept or not? Since it is we alone who have the knowledge that we have slept, does not this very knowledge prove that we did exist in deep sleep? When our existence and consciousness (*sat..chit*) in deep sleep is thus undeniable, if the body and world also had such an undeniable existence and consciousness, why do they (body and world) need the evidence of others to prove their existence in deep sleep? Because the evidence of others is needed to prove that the body and world exist during deep sleep, is it not clear that their existence is not self-evident? Since we have proved that an existence without consciousness is no existence at all, and since the knowledge that the body and world exist in deep sleep is not self-evident, we can positively assert that their existence is false. Therefore, let us conclude that the body and world

do not exist in deep sleep[24]. Thus, because no one can deny that he existed in sleep, **one's own existence in sleep and the non existence of the body there must be accepted by all.**

Many, because of their lack of maturity of understanding when first visiting Sri Bhagavan and scrutinizing the nature of reality as exposed by Him and as explained above, were not able to grasp the fact and be convinced that existence *(sat)* and consciousness *(chit)* are one and the same, and therefore were repeatedly arguing with Him. On the other hand. some, who had discrimination and a sharp, clear intellect, not already confused by a mere study of the sastras without any practice, were fully convinced as soon as they heard Sri Bhagavan's exposition (that the body and world do not exist in deep sleep) that it alone is right; therefore, they were able to proceed along the path of enquiry, But, those who did not have the maturity of intellect to be able to accept the non-existence of the body and world in deep sleep were stopped and could progress no further on the path.

Knowing well that an aspirant cannot know, "I am not the body" *(deham naham)*, and thereby give up his attachment to it unless he is fully convinced by his own experience, 'I can exist even without the body', Sri Bhagavan, while proclaiming the clarion call of Vedanta, *'deham naham koham soham'*, says in Tamil in His own words of Grace :

> *"Deham ghatamnihar jadamidar kahamenum tihazhviladal Naham jadalamil tuyilinil dinamurum namadiyalal..."*

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24 According to the following logical inference : "That which seems to exist at one time and not at another time is actually non-existent even while it seems to exist", the body and world are non-existent even during the time of their seeming existence, that is during waking and dream.

"The body *(deham)* is insentient like an earthen pot. Since it does not have the consciousness 'I' and since our existence is experienced (as 'I am') daily in deep sleep, where the body does not exist, it is not 'I' *(naham)...*"

'Ulladhu Narpadhu-Anubandham, verse 10

Yet some devotees of Sri Bhagavan often retort: "The Sanskrit original of this verse says, *'apeta supti samaye'*, which means that in deep sleep the body is merely absent, removed or unmanifest; does this not mean that we need not accept the total non-existence of the body in sleep?", Unless the aspirant's mind is well saturated with the conviction that there is no body at all in sleep, it will be given the chance to imagine that in sleep things other than the 'I' - consciousness, namely the body and world, exist at least in some subtle form, and that in future they may evolve into some very magnificent forms. Only when this chance is given to the mind, will it have room to form such meaningless theories as immortalizing the body (divinizing humanity) and heavenizing the world! Therefore, in order to clear the doubts of these aspirants, it becomes necessary to relate the following incident[25].

The original Sanskrit verse[26] composed by Sri Bhagavan in 1927 was as follows :

"Deham mrinmaya vajjadat makamaham buddhir natasya styato Naham tattadabhava supti samaye siddhatma sadbhavata.."

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25 This incident was related by Sri Muruganar. It is also mentioned in *'Day by Day with Bhagavan'* (20-1-1946 morning).

26 The original Sanskrit verse of Sri Bhagavan is published by Sri Ramanasramam as verse 56 of *'Sri Ramana Hridayam'* in a booklet called *'Revelation'*.

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in which the precise word He used was *'abhava'*. But a devotee, Kavya Kanta Ganapati Sastri, perhaps on account of his then inability to accept the non-existence of the body in deep sleep, and believing that the body is not totally non-existent but that it still exists in deep sleep at least in an unmanifest *(apeta)* condition, changed the text to *'apeta supti* samaye'[27]. The experience of Sri Bhagavan is : 'It does not exist *(abhava)*'! 'It does exist, at least in an *apeta* condition', is may be this devotee's opinion[28]. While translating the same verse into Tamil, Sri Bhagavan has used the Tamil words *'jadalamil'*, which means that the body does not exist at all. If Sri Bhagavan had agreed with the idea conveyed by the substitution, He would have translated it accordingly: but He has confirmed His own idea (i.e, *abhava)* by translating only the word used in His original Sanskrit composition. The Sanskrit version which is now in print (in all books other than *'Sri Ramana Hridayam)* is only the substitution of the devotee and not the original of Sri Bhagavan !

It is only by way of concession to the weakness of immature minds who believe that the body and world truly exist, that the sastras pacify them by saying: "The creation (the body and world) once came out of God or Self *(atman)*; it resolves into Him during sleep, death and dissolution

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27 Kavya Kanta Ganapati Sastri seems to have used the phrase *'apeta suptisamaye'* only in the sense 'during sleep, when the body does not appear', and not in the sense 'during sleep, when the body has no existance whatsoever'. The meaning which he gives to the word *apeta* can be clearly understood by those who read his Sanskrit commentary on *'Upadesa Saram'* verse 30.

28 Since there is no prosodic mistake in the original word *abhava* used by Sri Bhagavan, the word *apeta* must have been substituted only because Ganapati Sastri's idea was contrary to that of Sri Bhagavan. For if the word *apeta* gave the same meaning as *abhava*, where *was* the need for a substitution?

(pralaya), and comes out again". However, these pacifying words are not the absolute truth *(paramarthika satya)* and hence they cannot give full satisfaction to us, who are longing for and trying to know only the absolute truth. These explanations of the sastras do not stand before the personal experience of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, the *Maha Guru*, who never withheld, even in the least, the absolute truth from anyone; therefore, we need not take them to be His direct teaching. The same idea has been well expressed in the following verse by Sri Muruganar, the foremost disciple of Sri Bhagavan :

> "Although Guru Ramana taught various doctrines according to the level of understanding of those who came to Him, we heard from Him that ajata[29] alone is truly His *own* experience. Thus should you know."
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'*, verse 100

Since we exist even during sleep, when the body does not exist, we have to conclude, according to the basic test framed previously, that we cannot be the gross body (the physical body, breath and blood circulation).

Let us now consider the subtle body. Mind (which is thoughts) and intellect constitute this subtle body. We know that the mind is just a collection of thoughts. Even in the waking state, do we not sometimes have, without effort, moments of quietude when all thoughts subside? Do we cease to exist during those thought-free periods? No, even then we do exist. However, we hear some people complain, "The whole of my waking state is full of nothing but waves

29 *Ajata* is the knowledge that nothing – neither the world, soul nor God – ever comes into existence, and that 'That which is' ever exists as it is.

and waves of thoughts, and I have never experienced the subsidence of thoughts at all", Very well, it is right to welcome and reply to their complaint. The periods in which the waves of thoughts subside of their own accord in the waking state are the state of 'being still' *(summa iruttal)* or Self-abidance *(nishtha)*. Aspirants who have had this experience can easily grasp the truth, 'We can and do exist even in the absence of thoughts'. Yet for the sake of those who have complained, let us scrutinize deeper. Have we not already said that of all the thoughts which arise from sleep, the first person thought, 'I am the body', is the first? All other thoughts, which pertain to second and third person objects, multiply only by catching hold of this first thought. Even for those whose thoughts do not subside in the waking state, do not all thoughts vanish when sleep overtakes them, since the first thought, 'I am the body', itself subsides at that time? Thus, does not everyone of us have access to the thought-free state in dreamless sleep? There we are not non-existent !

> "... even in sleep, where there is no ego-'I', we are not non-existent!"
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 21

- says Sri Bhagavan. So, according to our basic test, since we exist even in the absence of the mind, we are not the mind,

Further, in the same manner as this 'I am the body'-consciousness *(dehatma-buddhi)* clings to the gross body as 'I', it can also cling in a subtle way to many other bodies. For instance, when the gross body is inactive, is not the mind working? Dream is one such case. It is an example of our taking a subtle body. During dream, the mind – as if it had taken another gross body – functions and knows many

things through that body. This dream body is simply a mental projection. It is nothing but the mind itself. So it can also be called the subtle body, But do we not exist in dreamless sleep? Therefore, since we can exist even without this dream-body, we can clearly understand that it is not 'I'. We should not think that the mind thus functions with a subtle body only in dream. Even in the waking state, do we not day-dream? At that time also, the same phenomenon takes place. Suppose we sit, not sleeping, and imagine that we travel to a far-off country, meet a friend there, talk with him and undergo all the ups and downs of life. At that time the body with which we seem to go, come, talk and so on, is also a subtle body of ours. We know that these subtle bodies which we thus take now and then are transient. When we wake up from dream, the dream-body is gone. In the same manner, the body assumed in day-dream also becomes false (non-existent). That is, these bodies are false forms which come on us and go. Thus we can conclude that we exist even in the absence of these bodies. Therefore, they are not 'we'.

Now, if we scrutinize further, we will find that we have another kind of body even subtler than the subtle body. Here also, to support this, each one of us has his own experience, namely dreamless sleep. At that time we have neither the gross nor subtle body. The mind having completely subsided we sink at rest in total darkness, knowing nothing. When the mind rises again from this darkness, either dream or waking results. When we wake up from deep sleep, we remember our experience thus, 'I slept happily and did not have any dream'. That is, we know that we existed even in that state of seeming darkness in which there was not even a dream. That dark state is called the

causal body[30], **We who know that we knew that we existed there, is the real 'I'.**

In deep sleep, the ego *(ahankara* – the mind in the form of attachments) is still alive in the very subtle form of tendencies *(vasanas)*; it is this form which is that base and cause for the rising of the subtle and gross bodies, and therefore it is called the causal body. Even in death, it is in this causal body that we exist. This causal body is not destroyed by the death of the gross body. The reason for asserting that even this causal body is not 'I', is that we exist there to know even that state to be alien to us. There, our **existence alone is real, and we cannot be the form** (darkness or ignorance) which we assume there. Just as we rejected the gross body of the waking state as 'I am not this body', even though it appeared to be 'I', and just as for the same reason we rejected the subtle body of the dream state as 'not I', let us now also reject this causal body (darkness or ignorance) of deep sleep as 'not I', since it is only a form which comes on us and goes. Therefore, having firmly eliminated all these three bodies as 'not I, not I', what then remains, that **knowledge**, the consciousness *(chit)* of our existence *(sat)*, alone is 'I'.

Can we eliminate these three bodies? Certainly we can, because they are only our sheaths and are extraneous to us. From what is extraneous to us, we can separate ourself. It is within our ability. Only when we thus separate

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30 The reason for saying here that there is a causal body still existing in sleep and that the darkness of sleep itself is its form – even though it has been explained on pages 61 to 67 that, according to the experience of Sri Bhagavan, the body and world exist in no form at all in deep sleep – is that our present scrutiny is done according to the footnote given on pages 52 to 53: "...but for the time being let us proceed on the assumption of ordinary people that sleep is a defective and mean state."

ourself from these sheaths, which are extraneous to us, will we know our true nature. According to the truth which we have already established, namely that **our true nature itself is happiness**, knowing our true nature is itself experiencing perfect happiness. Thus, the experience of Self-knowledge *(atma-swarupanubhava)* **is the very pinnacle of happiness.** It is the ultimate goal for which all living beings are knowingly or unknowingly searching through all their innumerable endeavours. Attaining – through the enquiry 'Who am I?' – **the knowledge** *(chit)* of our reality *(sat)* **as the perfect happiness** *(ananda)* is the supreme goal of mankind. The sole cause of all miseries is the mistake of veiling ourself by imagining these sheaths to be ourself, even though we are ever this existence-consciousness-bliss *(sat-chit-ananda)*.

CHAPTER 5

The Enquiry, 'Who Am I?' and The Four Yogas

This very process of thus separating ourselves from these sheaths, which are extraneous and alien to us, has been described in scriptures *(sastras)* as '*yoga*', Though in its strictest sense the word '*yoga*' simply means '*union*', our earlier analysis has led us to call this process one of '*separation*'. In effect however, these two (separation and union) are one and the same! What in Bhagavan Ramana's path to happiness has been so far described as 'a separation from what we are not' is the same as that which has been called by all the sastras which have prevailed in our midst up till now as 'union with God', If so, what is the reason for the use of these two contradictory words? The basic meaning which Sri Ramana, the *Loka Maha Guru,* gives us for the word 'I' is our true, natural consciousness, Self *(atma bhava),* whereas the basic meaning which has been given by the sastras up till now for the word 'I' is the consciousness 'I am this body' (jiva *bhava).*

Let us make this clear with an example. Suppose one man says, "I have come to Tiruvannamalai", and another says, "I have gone to Tiruvannamalai", both are pointing out the same event of reaching Tiruvannamalai. What do we infer from their way of pointing out that same event of reaching Tiruvannamalai with the contradictory words

'come' and 'gone'? Is it not evident that the first one is in Tiruvannamalai, while the other is not in Tiruvannamalai but is speaking from somewhere else? Similarly, the method which is given to on aspirant who asks for a path to perfect happiness will be described either as 'separation' *(viyoga)* or as 'union' *(yoga)* according to what is given to him or taken by him as the basic meaning for the word 'I'.

There is thus a difference between the yoga which has been taught by the sastras and the Self-enquiry taught by Sri Bhagavan. Accepting the wrong understanding of ordinary people, 'I am this body, I have a separate existence', as the base, the sastras teach the four yogas, namely *karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga* and *jnana yoga:-*

1. "Act without attachment to the fruit thereof", says *karma yoga.*
2. "Do not love any other thing; love God alone", says *bhakti yoga.*
3. "By separating yourself from God, you have degraded yourself into a petty individual soul *(jiva);* go and unite with Him again", says *raja yoga.*
4. "Know God", says *jnana yoga.*

In each of these four yogas, there must be an 'I': an 'I' to do action without attachment to the fruit thereof; an 'I' to love God; an 'I' that separated itself from God and that must now go back and unite with Him; and an 'I' which was so far ignorant of God and which is now trying to know Him. Thus, in all these four yogas the individual existence of an 'I' in the form of **'I am this' or 'I am so-and-so'** is indispensable. **Without this 'I', no yoga can be performed!**

Then, is it not necessary first of all to find out: 'Who is this I? Does he actually exist? Does he have a separate existence? Is he real?' Instead of frittering away one's energy

in attempting to attain the much cherished Godhood through the four yogas, it would be easier, more important and also best to know oneself first by scrutinizing 'Who am I – what is my true nature or existence?'. Until and unless a doubt-free knowledge of oneself is obtained, however much one may know about God by reading about Him, hearing about Him, or seeing visions of Him, doubts and miseries will be rising in one again and again – because there is an 'I'. It is only after accepting the conception that this 'I' who is to perform the four yogas is a separate entity that the sastras have given us the teachings on them. But **Bhagavan Sri Ramana does not at all allow us to accept this conception!** 'Before opening your coffers and finding your assets, do not begin to wail unnecessarily, proclaiming, 'I am a penniless beggar". First set about to open your box; then only, after seeing, can you speak about it. Similarly, before you enquire and know who you really are do not unnecessarily make the wrong estimate about yourself that you are a limited and petty individual soul *(jiva).* First set about to enquire and know yourself, and after knowing yourself, if 'you are still in need of anything (God, liberation, happiness, etc.), let us look to it then', advises Sri Bhagavan !

The 'I am the body'-consciousness *(dehatma-buddhi)* is the individual soul *(jiva);* in other words, the nature of the individual soul is nothing but the wrong knowledge 'I am the body'.

> "Though this insentient body cannot say 'I' (i.e. does not have the feeling 'I'), and though existence-consciousness *(sat-chit,* Self) has no rising and setting, between these two rises an 'I' of the measure of the body (the 'I am the body' - identification). Know this alone to be the knot

> between consciousness and the insentient *(chit-jada-granthi)*, bondage *(bandham)*, soul *(jiva)*, subtle body *(sukshma sarira)*, ego *(shankara)*, this mundane state of activities *(samsara)*, mind *(manas)* and so *on* !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 24

This 'I am the body' – consciousness rises after sleep, exists and remains active till sleep, and again subsides in sleep. Since the body is insentient, it has no 'I'-consciousness; hence this **consciousness** (which rises as 'I am the body') **cannot be said to be the body!** Can we then call it Self *(atman)*, since it is an 'I'-consciousness? No, we cannot, for rising and setting is not the nature of Self. The nature of Self is existence-consciousness *(sat-chit)*, shining ever as **'I am'** without rising and setting. thus, **this consciousness 'I am the body', which has a rising and a setting, cannot be said to be Self either.** It is neither Self, which is consciousness, nor the body, which is insentient! It is a ghost-like false appearance, taking the size of the body as its own size, being limited by time and space, being a mixure of the quality of the body (i.e. rising and setting) and the quality of Self (i.e. shining as an 'I'-consciousness), but at the same time alien to both of them, and rising as a knot *(granthi)* between Self *(chit)* and the insentient body *(jada)* – *chit-jada-granthi*. This is the ego, otherwise called bondage, soul, subtle body, *samsara* (the mundane state of activity) mind and so on.

> "This formless and ghostly ego (i.e. it has no form of its own) comes into existence by grasping a body-form! Having grasped a form, it endures, and having grasped a form, it waxes more by feeding upon forms, Leaving one form, it grasps another

> form. When sought for, it takes to flight; what a wonder it is ! Thus should you know."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadu'* verse 25

"The ego can come into existence only by identifying with a form (a body) as 'I'. It can exist only by clinging to that form. Taking forms (through the five senses) for its food to live upon, it will wax more and more. Leaving one form with which it had identified as 'I'; it will catch another form as 'I' ! It will lose its existence and disappear only when it is sought for: 'What is it?' or 'Who am I?'. This ego, which rises in the form 'I am the body', is thus a formless, imaginary and empty ghost-like appearance, having no real existence", says Bhagavan Sri Ramana !

"Presupposing the existence of a non-existent thing and then wanting to get salvation for that imaginary 'I', you have to start and try to do so through the above-said four paths of yoga. When your *sadhanas* themselves become a means of giving life to the non-existent ego, how can they destroy it? To do any *sadhana* except Self-enquiry *(atma-vichara)*, the existence of the mind *(jiva)* is indispensable. For, how to perform those *sadhanas* without the mind? To try to destroy the ego by *sadhanas* other than Self-enquiry is to be just like a thief turning himself into a policeman to catch the thief who is none but himself. Only Self-enquiry can reveal the truth that the ego (mind or *jiva)* has no existence whatsoever! So do not accept this ego, the truth of which you have not yet found out by scrutiny; deny it by giving no importance to its existence, root it out and burn it to extinction by attending to how or from what (whence) it rises! Instead of doing so, if you accept it as a real entity even before enquiring and finding out what it is (i.e. before finding out 'Who am I?'), it itself will be a fetter

to you and will create many non-existent obstacles (such as lust, anger, etc.) for you, and will then involve you in the aforesaid unnecessary efforts to overcome them" – thus says Sri Bhagavan[31].

Only if we first accept as Self a thing which is not Self, does a need arise for a yoga to make efforts from there to unite with another real Thing. Wrongly accepting a thing in this manner before scrutinizing it, is itself ignorance! That itself is bondage! Rather than first accepting a thing of which the truth is not properly known – bondage, which is in fact non-existent – and then struggling to get rid of the miseries caused by it, would it not be wiser and more apt to enquire and find out, 'Does it exist? What is, it? Who am I, 'that thing ?' ?

> "The mere enquiry 'To whom are these defect: *karmas*[32] (actions), *vibhakti* (lack of devotion), *viyoga* (disunion) and *ajnana* (ignorance) ?' is itself *karma*[33], *bhakti*, *yoga* and *jnana !* (How ?) When thus enquired, 'I' is (found to be) non-existent, (and hence) these defects are (also found to be)

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31 Refer to the whole of the first chapter (' Self-Enquiry') of *'Maharshi's, Gospel'*, Book II

32 *Karmas:* here means *kamya karmas* i.e. actions performed with a sense of doership.

33 *Karma:* here means *nishkamya karma,* i.e. action performed without a sense of doership.

Sri Bhagavan used to say that *nishkamya karma* (desireless action) cannot be done so long as there is a sense of doership while performing the action. Whether one wants the result of the action or not, it will certainly give him the fruit since he remains as an entity, the doer. So it should be corrected to *'nishkartritva karma'* (doershipless action) instead of *nishkamya karma*. Thus, the real defect in performing *karmas* is the doership and not the expectation of a result.

ever non-existent. The truth is, (then revealed) that we ever remain as (the defectless) Self!"

Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandham', verse 14

If we ask, 'To whom are these *four* defects, namely that of not performing *nishkamya karmas,* that of not loving God *(vibhakti),* that of being separated *from* God *(viyoga)* and that of not knowing God *(ajnana)?',* the answer will be 'To me', If we then enquire 'Who is this I?', that itself is truly doing the four yogas: *karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga* and *jnana yoga.* Because, by thus enquiring who one is, this defective 'I' will be found to be non-existent. When this 'I' is thus found to be non-existent, these *four* defects will also be found to have been ever non-existent. Our real experience will then be that we are ever shining as the defectless Self-alone.

When this state is attained by the enquiry 'Who am I ?', who is then left there to practice the four *yoga-sadhanas,* and why to do so? Hence, the enquiry, Who am I ?' is the essence of all yogas. It is the Maha Yoga[34], the greatest of all yogas.

Bhagavan Sri Ramana starts His teaching, 'Who am I ?', taking Self, the state of true existence *(sat bhava),* to be our basic knowledge. Therefore, He does not at all allow us to accept the non-existent ego, the sense of individuality *(Jiva bhava).* But in other paths, that is, in yogas, instructions are given taking as our basic knowledge the sense of individuality *(jiva* bhava), a false existence

34 Though Self-enquiry is not a yoga, it has been called the *Maha Yoga* because it reveals the knowledge that *yoga* has never existed. However, it should not be thought that the word '*Maha Yoga*' implies the existence of a '*maha yoga*' which needs to be rectified.

which we have accepted with out prior scrutiny[35]. That is why in the sastras the process is named 'union' or 'yoga'. If so, some may doubt thus: "Are all the Vedantic sastras wrong, and have they cheated the aspirants? Can sastraic statements be false? *Or* are we to conclude that Bhagavan Sri Ramana has condemned the sastras ?"

No, it is not so, **Neither do the sastras tell lies, nor does Bhagavan Sri Ramana condemn the sastras** !! The fact of the matter is this: the absolute truth *(paramarthika sastya),* which is the very life of the sastras, has been rendered as if lifeless in the course of time by the wrong explanations of mere bookworms, who have mastered only the letter but have not understood the true import of the sastras. **The true import of the sastras cannot be learnt except from Jnanis, that is, those who have had and live in the direct experience of Reality; no one can understand the true spirit behind any of the sastras merely by his command over language or by his keenness and superiority of intellect.** We can clarify this point with two examples.

Firstly: Let us take the *mahavakya* 'That thou art' *(tat* twam *asi).* We should note the difference between the decision of Sri Bhagavan and that of the learned pandits with regard to what an aspirant *(mumukshu)* should do as soon as he hears these divine and significant words. Having mastered the sastras, these scholars, who lecture on them with their peculiar interpretations to laymen, begin to do *japa* of (i.e. to repeat) the *mahavakyas* such as 'That thou art' *(tat twam asi),* 'I am Brahman' *(aham brahmasmi)* and 'I am He' *(soham),* or they begin to think (meditate) 'I am Brahman', They also instruct others to do *japa* and meditation in the same manner. In place of the former

35 See the story of the boy and the ghost on pages 81 to 82.

thought, 'I am a man or *jiva'*, they now have, a different thought, 'I am Brahman'. This is nothing but replacing one thought by another! It is not the thought-free state of Self-abidance *(nishtha)!* Not knowing the correct practice which is to be done as soon as the *mahavakyas* are thus heard, repetition *(japa)* of them or meditation *(dhyana)* upon them are performed; but, being fully aware that such wrong practices would and could never bestow the experience *of* true knowledge *(jnana)*, even though practised for years together, Sri Bhagavan at once puts the aspirant on the right path by instructing him thus:-

> "Since the sastras proclaim, 'Thou art That which is called the Supreme', and since That itself always shines as Self, for one to meditate 'I am That and not this (the *body* and so on)', instead of knowing oneself through the enquiry 'What am I?' and abiding as Self, is indeed due to lack of strength (of mind) !"
>
> *Ulladhu Narpadhu verase* 32

As soon as the sastras declare, 'Thou art That', turning his attention Self wards, 'I am what? Who am I?' should be the immediate reaction of an aspirant; it is not meant that he should meditate 'I am not this body, I am that Brahman.' The purpose of the sastras in saying 'That thou art' is to make the aspirant turn his attention towards Self, 'Who am I?'. On the other hand, by turning the *mahavakyas*' I am That', 'I am He' and 'I am Brahman' into *japa* and meditation, not only is the very purpose of the sastras defeated, but also the aspirants deprive themselves of the proper benefit they should have obtained from the sastras, do they not? When Sri Bhagavan directly takes the aspirant to Self-attention, is He not truly fulfilling the objective of

the sastras and thus revitalizing them? Can it then be said that He is contradicting them? It certainly cannot ! Here is an apt story to illustrate this point.

One evening a young boy went for a stroll with his father. When dusk had almost set in, he beheld a tree-trunk from which the branches and leaves had been cut off. He was terrified and screamed, "Oh Father! There, see, a ghost!" Though his father knew the truth that it was just the stem of a tree, he assured the boy," Oh, that ghost! It cannot do you any harm. I am here and will see to it, Come on"; so saying, he led the boy away. On hearing the encouraging words of his father, the boy took them to mean, 'My father is stronger than the ghost and that is why he says that it can do me no harm'. This conclusion of the boy is similar to the understanding of the pandits about the meaning of the Yoga and Vedanta sastras !.

Next evening, while going, for a stroll with his teacher along the same path, the boy exclaimed, "Sir, look ! There's the ghost; we saw it yesterday also ," The teacher pitied him for his ignorance and said, "That is not a ghost", But the boy persisted, "No sir, my father also saw it yesterday; he even assured me that he would see to it that it could do me no harm; but sir, you say it is not a ghost at all'" Would the teacher yield so easily? He said, "Go near it and see for yourself; I will shine the flashlight on it. If it turns out to be a ghost, I too will see to it !"

The sastras are like the words of the father in the story. The father also knew well that it was not a ghost. Similarly, the great Sages who gave these sastras also knew well the absolute truth *(paramarthika satya)* that nothing such as the ego, body, or world has ever come into existence at all. The father, knowing that his son was quite unfit to

make a closer examination on account of his much frightened state at that time, talked to him as if he were also accepting the existence of the false ghost imagined by his son. Even while talking like that, he was not telling a lie. To allay quickly the fear of his son, he said, 'The ghost cannot do you any harm: That was indeed the truth! However, what the teacher told him the next day was the absolute truth *(paramarthika satya)*. Although the, teacher's statement that it was not a ghost seems to contradict the father's statement, does it not in fact lend more support to the objective of the father's statement that the ghost could do the boy no harm, by making him see for himself that it was after all only the stem of a tree? By thus fulfilling the father's objective does not the statement of the teacher breathe new life into that of the father"? Instead of understanding thus, if the boy were to conclude,' Either my teacher has condemned my father, Of my father has told me an outright lie', it would be utterly wrong on his part. Similarly, **Sri Bhagavan has neither condemned the sastras, nor shown them to be false; nor have the sastras stated untruths.** If any reader were to come to this mistaken conclusion about Sri Bhagavan, 'he would be just as much wrong as would have been the boy in our story.

Secondly: In' *Kaivalya Navanitham'*, which is a standard non-dualistic work *(jnana-sastra)* in Tamil, it is stated, "For the *jnani,* the fruits of the accumulated past actions which are to bear fruit in future births *(sanchita karma)* are burnt up by the fire of knowledge *(jnana);* the good and bad fruits of the actions done in this birth *(agamya karma)* are nullified by their being taken up by those who praise Him and blame Him respectively (i.e. by those who do good or harm to Him through thought, word or deed); and only the remaining third *karma,* that portion of the past

actions which are to give fruit in this present birth *(prarabdha karma)*, is to be experienced by Him for the duration of His body, and it will end only with the death of His body:" But Sri Bhagavan gives His verdict:

> "To say that *Sanchita* and *agamya* will not adhere to a *Jnani*, but that *prarabdha* does remain (to be experienced by Him) Is only a (superficial) reply to the questions of others, Just as none of the wives will remain unwidowed when the husband dies, so all the three *karmas* will be extinguished when the doer (the ego) dies, Thus should you know !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandham'*, verse 33

It has been pointed out by Sri Bhagavan that the statement of the *jnana sastras* that *prarabdha* remains for a *Jnani* is 'only a reply to the questions, of others'! Now, to whom does Sri Bhagavan refer as 'others'? Only to the ignorant (those who are in a similar state of delusion as the boy in our story) who, not being able to grasp that '*jnana* itself is the *jnani;* He is not a human form'[36], see the *jnani (jnana,* the bodiless) as one who has a body – as a body form, that is, as an individual! Such people will be repeatedly asking, "How does the *Jnani* walk, how does He talk, how does He work?" and so on and so forth; and for them it is something new and incomprehensible how at all it is possible to have an existence other than the 'I am the body' – identification! Therefore, referring to these people as 'others', Sri Bhagavan explains that only such a reply has to be given to them. However, to those mature aspirants *(mumukshus)* who came to Him with the courage to know the final truth as it is – since they alone truly belong to Him – Sri Bhagavan lays

36 Rafer to appendix one (b), ' *Who is Jnani?*', verse *10,*

bare the truth, without concealing anything, in the second half of the verse:" ...Just as none of the wives will remain unwidowed when the husband dies, so all the three *karmas* will be extinguished when the doer (the ego) dies, Thus should you know!", If a man has three wives and dies, all the three wives will be widowed; none of them will be missed out. Similarly, as soon as the one who has done the *karmas* (i.e. the sense of doership – *kartritva)* dies in true knowledge *(jnana)*, all the fruits of the three *karmas* come to an end since the experiencer (i.e. the sense of experiencership[37]-*bhoktritva)* is no longer alive. How can it then be said that Sri Bhagavan has criticized or contradicted '*Kaivalya Navanitham*'? Sri Bhagavan's statement is certainly not a condemnation, since in the first half of the verse He clearly explains the reason why it is so said in '*Kaivalya Navanitham*' !

The one Supreme Thing *(para vastu)*, assuming the form of various *Veda-rishis*, gave the sastras to the world according to the development of the people and their power of understanding at that time. Later on, that same Supreme Thing appears in the form of various *Jnana-Gurus* and makes clear – through so many new methods which will suit the intellectual development of the people in that particular age – its own supreme truth, which it had already revealed through the sastras, but which had been twisted and rendered lifeless by people of perverted intellect who did not properly understand it! (In this context, the reader may refer to the *Bhagavad Gita*, chapter four, verses 1 to 3.)

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37 The sense of doership, i.e. the feeling 'I am the doer' and the sense of experiencership, i.e. the feeling 'I am the experiencer', are one and the same. For a detailed explanation, see *'The Path of Sri Ramana – Part Two'*, chapter three and appendix two:

"Reason does not contradict, but fulfils. No Sage has ever come to contradict". Jesus Christ meant the very same thing when He said, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Sermon on the Mount) !

The revolutionary teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who steer clear of all the roundabout routes in the sastras and shows the aspirants the direct and easy path, will appear to be a condemnation only in the eyes of those pandits who are attracted and deluded by the darkness of the vast forest of the sastras, and who never had the benefit of their study but suffer from mere scriptural fanaticism, and who use their learning only to show off their skill in intellectual acrobatics on the platforms and to write commentaries in bombastic style on the sastras in order to earn name and fame; but those sincere aspirants who want to have the real benefit of the sastras will see the teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana as the crest-jewel adorning the crown of the sastras, imparting a new life and fresh glory to them !

The difference between the mode of teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana and that of the sastras lies in the fundamental out-look given to us as the base from which we are to follow their teachings. That is why, whenever aspirants who were practising *sadhanas*. learnt from the sastras asked Sri Bhagavan about their *sadhanas,* which they thought to be real *tapas,* Sri Bhagavan replied with 'the sole intention of changing the fundamental outlook given to them by the sastras! Those mature disciples who had a sharp and clear intellect were able to grasp at once the intention of the *Sadguru* and engaged themselves in enquiring into their wrong outlook, ' I am the body' *(jiva bhava);* thus they became intensely still, since they no

longer made efforts in the *sadhanas* they had been doing in the name of *tapas* and since they stopped asking questions to clear their doubts about them. This stillness was indeed the peace which we often hear described as being the experience of many aspirants newly coming into the presence of Sri Bhagavan. However, only those earnest aspirants who made use of this stillness and dived deep within by attending to Self more and more intensely, made eternal peace their own. But those who failed to understand that Sri Bhagavan's intention was to change their fundamental outlook were repeatedly raising the same type of questions to clear their doubts about what they had learnt from the sastras, which lent support to their wrong outlook, 'I am the body'. Seeing the bewilderment of those who could not come to His path and taking pity on them,[38] even Sri Bhagavan would on some occasions reply to their doubts in the sastraic terminology itself, as if like the sastras He too were accepting the false sense 'I am the body' as the base. Therefore, **such replies can never be the direct teaching of Sri Bhagavan!** If one has carefully studied the various books, both in prose and poetry (such as '*Sri Ramana Gita*', , *Talks* with *Sri Ramana Maharshi*', '*Day by Day with Bhagavan*', '*Maharshi's Gospel*' and so on), in which some of the conversations of devotees with Sri Bhagavan were recorded, from the early days when it was found that He was not keeping silence and was talking with devotees till the very end of His life, it will now be clear why such questions were asked and why Sri Bhagavan gave such replies.

Let us see an incident which will clearly show the difference between the *tapas* prescribed by the sastras and based upon the fundamental outlook, 'I am the body' (*jiva*

38 These are the people referred to as 'others' in '*Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandham*', verse 33, quoted on page 82.

bhava). and the *tapas* based upon the fundamental outlook of pure existence *(sat bhava)* recommended by Sri Bhagavan in His teaching, 'Who am I?', Kavya Kanta Ganapati Sastri, who was the foremost poet in Sanskrit among the devotees of Sri Bhagavan and who was good at the *tapas* of existing upon the least quantity of food, once told Sri Bhagavan, "It seems to me that just three rupees a month are sufficient for us to live." Quick came Sri Bhagavan's retort, "When even the body is not necessary for us to live, why then three rupees?", We must clearly understand the implication underlying this conversation, When Ganapati Sastri remarked," for us to live ", he meant only, for the body to iive ; 'it is thus clear that his fundamental outlook was' the body is I', When Sri Bhagavan retorted, " for us to live ", He meant, for Self to live'; it is thus clear that His fundamental outlook was that the pure consciousness, which is devoid of the five sheaths, is 'I', From this conversation, cannot the reader clearly see what each of them experienced as the knowledge of his existence ?

Is it not evident from this that not only did Sri Bhagavan Himself always unshakably remain under all circumstances in His true state, Self-consciousness, but that He also instructed those devotees who wholly relied upon Him against their giving even the least room to the wrong identification 'I am the body' *(dehatma-buddhi)?* That is why the teaching of Sri Ramana has a special greatness of its own, with a revolutionary character, and shines over the various methods of spiritual practice so far followed by us as the true, unique, clear and rational one !

But some among us, due to lack of *sraddha*[39], often raise the fallowing objection: "Unless the mind first becomes

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39 *Sraddha* means not only faith, but also the eagerness and confidence to make persistent efforts to put the teaching into practice.

mature by means of yogic practices and thereby gains strength, will it be fit to take to Self-enquiry? Will it not wander as thought-waves?" But in fact it is not so! Concerning this, Sri Bhagavan has given clear instructions in His prose work *'Who am I'*, where He explains: "If other thoughts arise, see to whom they arise. 'To me' will be the answer; [this, me' will remind you of the 'I'-consciousness]. Then the mind can return immediately to Self. attention, 'Who am I'. **By repeatedly practising thus, the strength of the mind to abide in its source increases."**

The power which the mind derives from other spiritual practices **is not that power which is required to abide in its source!** Repetition of holy names *(japa)*, meditation *(dhyana)*, concentration on anyone of the six yogic centres in the body (the *shadchakras* pointed out in *raja yoga)*. concentration on a divine effulgence *(jyoti)* or sound *(nada)* – in all these practices the mind is only made to attend to some alien object (a second or third person). The strength of mind acquired by training it to catch hold of anyone of the aforesaid alien objects is not the genuine strength of mind which is favourable for Self--knowledge. Being unfavourable, rather than calling it 'strength of mind', it would be more appropriate to call it **'lack of strength of mind'** *(uran inmai* – the original Tamil words of Sri Bhagavan in *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 32)! Let us suppose a man buys a cow and for various reasons keeps it tied up in another man's shed for quite some days. When the owner one day tries to bring the cow to its own shed after it has become accustomed – through force of habit *(abhyasa bala)* – to its former surroundings, will it come to its own place and keep quiet? No, it will run back to the other man's shed. So any intelligent farmer buying a new cow will train it to remain in its own shed by tying it only there. Similarly.

aspirants who have developed mental strength by concentrating on second and third person objects (which are other than Self) struggle and find it difficult even to understand what Self-attention – knowing one's own existence – is, and how to take the feeling of one's own existence as the target ! It is often said, "Let me first gain strength of mind by training it in other practices, and then let me take to Self-enquiry"; but it is the experience of anyone who has trained his mind in other practices over a long period of time that such a mind is still weaker to turn Self wards than even an ordinary mind untrained in *any* other practice.

Let us takes an example the experience of Sri Ganapati Sastri, who is renowned as Ganapati Muni and who is considered to be one of the important disciples of Sri Bhagavan, There was no one who excelled him in doing *japa*. He had performed *japa* by the crores. He was even proclaimed by his own 'disciples to be 'Mantreswara', the Lord of *mantras*, and he refers to himself as such in '*Sri Ramana Gita*' (chapter 18, verse 15). He had also developed some wonderful mental powers such as *asukavitvam* (the ability to compose extempore verses on *any* given subject) and *satavadhanam* (the ability to attend to a hundred things at the same time). Yet he often used to *say*, "I can even go to Indra-loka and say what Indra is doing, but I cannot go within and find the source of 'I'. Sri Bhagavan Himself also remarked on a number of occasions'[40] "Nayana (Ganapati Muni) used to say, 'It is easy for me to send the mind forward but impossible for me to make it go backward, that is, to turn it inward. I can go forward (that is, towards

40 See for example *'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi'*, number 362, section 3, and '*Day by Day with Bhaghavan*', 9-5-1946, second paragraph.

second and third persons) *any* distance at any speed, but I find it difficult to take even one step backward (that is, towards the first person)'."

What can we infer from this? The subtle points about the results of *japa* will be clear only to those who actually take to practising it with utmost earnestness and sincerity, and not to those who merely argue, '*Japa* will help one to do Self-enquiry'. Sri Ganapati Muni was one who truly immersed himself in the practice of *japa* for many years and who had best experience of it, so does not his experience clearly prove that what we have said above is correct?

In this connection some ask, "When the truth is such, why did Sri Bhagavan say in ' *Who am* I',' By meditation upon forms of God (*murti-dhyana)* and by repetition of sacred words *(mantra-japa)*, thoughts subside more and more, and for the mind which thus gains one-pointedness and strength, Self-enquiry will easily be attained'? Therefore, will not Self-enquiry become easy for those who do *japa* or *dhyana* ?"

We should scrutinize deeply what is actually meant in the work '*Who am I*?'. Since the perpetually wandering mind expands into innumerable thoughts, each thought becomes extremely weak. Just as when an iron chain is given to the restless trunk of an elephant, the elephant will cling fast *only* to that and will not do any mischief with its trunk, so if the mind is trained to hold on to anyone of the names or forms of God, it will gain one-pointedness, that is, the strength to cling to one thing *only*. In this *way*, the mind merely loses the nature of branching out into many thoughts.

There are two kinds of impediments which act as obstacles for the mind to achieve Self-abidance, and hence

two kinds of strength of mind are essential for overcoming them. The first strength is that which is required to prevent the mind from branching out into innumerable thoughts through the force of tendencies towards sense-objects *(vishaya-vasanas)*. The second strength is that which is required to direct the mind (the power of attention) towards the first person or Self, that is, the strength actually to attend to Self. By practices such as repetition *(japa)* and meditation *(dhyana)*, *only* the strength to be free from the first impediment, that is, from the tendencies towards sense-objects, is obtained. **But for a mind which engages in Self-attention from the very beginning, both kinds of requisite strength are naturally cultivated.** Though through *japa* and *dhyana* the mind achieves the strength not to branch out into *many* thoughts and thereby become weak, it is still dwelling only upon a second person. Thus the practice of *japa* or *dhyana* develops the power of the mind to cling with great attachment only to one second person or another. In this way, the second great impediment, namely the inability to turn the mind from second persons to the first person is unknowingly increased. Therefore, when such a mind is to turn Selfwards, it will find it to be a very difficult task. This is the truth we have to learn from the personal experience of Sri Ganapati Muni. Let us now explain with a simile how acquiring the power of one-pointedness of mind through such practices as *japa* and *dhyana* becomes a great obstacle to Self-attention.

Let us suppose that a certain man has decided to go by cycle from Tiruvannamalai to Vellore, a town fifty miles north of Tiruvannamalai, but does not know the art of cycling. If he trains himself to cycle by practising along the road leading to Tirukoilur, a town twenty miles south of Tiruvannamalai, after many hours he will have learnt the

skill of cycling. But he will now be twenty miles south of Tiruvannamalai, that is, seventy miles away from Vellore, his destination. So will he not now have to make far more effort and waste far more time in order to reach Vellore? Instead of this, if he had from the very beginning started to train himself to cycle by practising along the road towards Vellore, after the same number of hours he would have travelled twenty miles closer to Vellore. Besides. since he would have learnt the skill of cycling by that time, he could have easily completed the remaining thirty miles and reached his destination without undue expenditure of time and effort.

What happens when one practises *japa* and *dhyana* is similar to what happened when the man practised cycling along the road to Tirukoilur. Since the strength acquired through *japa* and *dhyana* is cultivated in an opposite direction, that is, towards a second person, are they not activities which lead one far away from Self-attention? On the other hand, if one practises Self-attention from the very beginning, that will be similar to the man starting to practise cycling along the road to Vellore. Since Self-attention, which is Self-enquiry, thus avoids all unnecessary efforts and directly bestows Self attainment, Sri Bhagavan has said in verse 4 of '*Atmavidya Kirtanam*', "*Of* all paths, this path (Self-enquiry) is the easiest", and in verse 17 of '*Upadesa Undhiyar*', "This is the direct path for all".

Since the practice of *japa* or *dhyana* prevents the mind from branching out into various thoughts pertaining to sense-objects and thereby becoming weak, Sri Bhagavan said in '*Who am I?*' that they give strength to the mind. But He said so taking into consideration only one benefit, namely that of saving the mind from the calamity of

branching out into innumerable thoughts caused by the tendencies towards sense-objects *(vishaya-vasanas)*. Moreover, the strength mentioned thereby, Sri Bhagavan is not that strength which is required for Self-enquiry and which He had mentioned earlier in the work '*Who am I?*' when He wrote, "By repeatedly practising thus, the strength of the mind to abide (or dwell) in its source increases". **It is only a strength to dwell upon an object other than Self, that is, upon a second person.** Readers should understand that what is pointed out here, in this book, is that for those who want and strive for only **Self-attainment, this kind of strength obtained through japa and dhyana is nothing but a hindrance.**

The help towards success in Self-enquiry which is derived from *japa* and *dhyana* is similar to the help in reaching Vellore which is gained by learning cycling along the road to Tirukoilur, for just as in the long run practising cycling on the road to Tirukoilur may be an indirect aid towards reaching Vellore, so in the long run practising *japa* and *dhyana* may be an indirect aid towards attaining Self. Likewise, the hindrance towards success in Self-enquiry which is created by *japa* and *dhyana* is similar to the hindrance which is created by learning cycling along the road to Tirukoilur, for, just as practising cycling on the road to Tirukoilur takes the man far away from his destination, so practising *japa* and *dhyana* hinders one by taking one far away from Self.[41]

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41 Let not sincere devotees of God think that we are disparaging the *japa* done by a true devotee who calls upon his lord by repeating His divine name with pure, heart-melting love for His Feet. What are criticized here as useless are the repetitions of sacred words *(mantra--japas)* and the targets of meditation *(dhyana-lakshyas)* which are used as *sadhanas* without *love* basing combined with them and with the sole intention of gaining the power of one-pointedness. But since an

Gaining the power of one-pointedness of mind is here compared to gaining skill in the art of cycling. This power of one-pointedness is a wonderful weapon which, like a sharp knife, fire or nuclear power; *may* do good or harm, depending on how it is used. A sharp knife may be used either to kill a person or, in a surgical operation, to save his life. In the same way, fire and nuclear power can be used either for constructive or destructive purposes. Similarly, the power of one-pointedness cultivated in one through practices such as *japa* and *dhyana may* do one either good or harm. If one is fond of occult powers *(siddhis)* or sensual pleasures, he can" use this power of one-pointedness in a very subtle and skilful *way* in order to achieve them. Since the power of one-pointedness gained through *japa* and *dhyana* is only a one-pointedness on a second person, that is since it is an extroverted one-pointedness, it will induce the aspirant to proceed only towards the non-Self. Only if he has a good discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral *(nitya anitya vastu viveka)* and if he is then able to change his course from second person attention to first person attention, will such a power of one-pointedness lead him to Self-enquiry and, after long and strenuous efforts (just like the long and strenuous efforts which the man who learnt cycling on the road to Tirukoilur had to make in order to travel all the seventy miles to Vellore), enable him to gain Self abidance, which is the attainment of true

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aspirant on the path of devotion *(bhakti-marga)* who does *japa* of the divine name of his lord (his *Ishta-deva* or *Guru)* with intense love comes under the category of a student in the third (b) or fourth standard of our school of *bhakti* explained in chapter two of *'The Path of Sri Ramana. Part Two'*. where we expound the path of self-surrender, which is one of the two main paths – Self-enquiry and self-surrender – taught by Sri Bhagavan, his *japa* done with love is neither condemned nor discouraged. The reader may here refer to appendix one (d).

knowledge *(jnana)*. However, do we not see that aspirants on the spiritual path who are doing *japa* and *dhyana* are generally inclined only towards gaining occult powers, name and fame, and other such transitory pleasures? Therefore, we should understand the truth that the power of one pointedness gained through *japa* or *dhyana* is anyway dangerous and that **it would hence be wise to gain the power of one-pointedness by practising Self-attention instead from the very beginning.**

It is of course essential to achieve one-pointedness of mind. Even while doing *japa* or *dhyana,* it is necessary to make effort to bring back repeatedly the power of attention (the mind) from wandering over other thoughts and to fix it on only one thought. The same amount of effort is also needed while practising Self-attention in order to bring back the wandering mind and to fix it in our existence-consciousness. Thus in both kind of practice, an earnest effort is needed to obtain one-pointedness of mind. When this is so, why should not an aspirant obtain it by practising Self-attention, which is free of all danger, from the very beginning? The following incident which happened in the presence of Sri Bhagavan will cast more light upon this point.

After sitting for some time in His presence, a devotee asked Sri Bhagavan, "Bhagavan, I am not able to do Self-enquiry. I find it difficult. Shall I do *dhyana* instead ?" "All right", replied Sri Bhagavan. Soon afterwards the devotee left the hall, whereupon Sri Bhagavan turned to those near Him and said, "He says that Self-enquiry is difficult for him and that he cannot do it, so he asks me for permission to do *dhyana*. How can I compel him to do Self-enquiry when he himself says that he cannot do it? So when he wants to do *dhyana*, I have to say 'All right'. He may come tomorrow

and say, 'Bhagavan, my mind does not remain in *dhyana,* so shall I do *japa?*' Again I will have to say 'All right'. In the same manner, he will one day complain, 'My mind does not remain quietly in *japa.* Only my tongue spells the *mantra,* but my mind wanders on *many* things. Shall I do worship *(puja),* recite hymns *(stotras !* and so on?' What else can I do except to say All right, all right' in reply to each and every complaint? If one is able to make a sincere effort to practise anything, whether recitation of hymns, *japa, dhyana* or any other *sadhana,* one can, with the same effort, practise Self-enquiry ! All these complaints are made only by those who do not earnestly like to do any *sadhana,* that's all. What is essential in any *sadhana* is to try to bring back the running mind and fix it on one thing only'. Why then should it not be brought back and fixed in Self-attention? That alone is Self-enquiry *(alma-vichara).* That is all that is to be done! Even in the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said:

> *Sanais sanai rupa ramed buddhya dhriti grihi taya*
> *Atma samstham manah kritva nakim chidapi chinta yet*

which means, 'By means of an extremely courageous intellect (power of discrimination), make the mind motionless little by little; fix the mind firmly in Self *(atman)* and never think of *any* other thing' (chapter 6, verse 25), *and:*

> *Yato yato nis charati manas chanchalam asthi ram*
> *Tatas tato niyam yaitad atman yeva vasam nayet*

which means, 'Towards whatever thing the unsteady mind wanders, *from* each thing pull it back, fix it always in Self *and* make it firmly abide there' (chapter 6, verse 26)[42]

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42 These two *slokas* were translated into Tamil by Sri Bhagavan as verses 27 and 28 of *'Bhagavad Gita Saram',*

Even concentrating on thoughts such as 'I am Brahman' *(aham brahmasmi)*, which is considered to be the highest *form* of meditation *(dhyana)*, has been described by Sri Bhagavan *as* being 'due to lack of strength' *(uran inmaiyinal)* in verse 32 of *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'* ! Therefore, what the mind gains by taking as targets second or third persons, which are the objects of *japa, dhyana* and so on, **is not really strength, but only weakness!** Can a racehorse accustomed to forward gallop be useful in drawing water from wells, where a backward movement of the horse is indispensable? No, it will be of no use! Only that practice of Self-attention which Sri Bhagavan referred to in *'Who am I?'* when He wrote, "By repeatedly practising thus, the strength of the mind to abide in its source increases", **is the right sadhana which will give the mind the real requisite strength!** Those aspirants who came to Sri Bhagavan with a mind not already spoilt by being trained towards targets other than Self, a mind with no trace of lethargy, with immense eagerness, and with a spirit of unquestioning obedience like that of children, directly turned their mind to the practice of Self-attention in the *form* of 'Who am I?' as soon as they came to Sri Bhagavan and thereby gained the real requisite strength mentioned above. They were therefore able to proclaim from their own experience, "Ah! Knowing Self is the easiest thing! Indeed, it is the easiest!"[43]

Although the enquiry 'Who am I?' is thus able to give the real strength of mind which is required to gain Self-knowledge (to say the truth, only Self-enquiry, and not any of the other *sadhanas*, can give this requisite strength), a wrong idea exists and is, spreading even among us,[44] the

43 The refrain composed by Sri Muruganar for *'Atmavidya Kirtanam '*.

44 Though the word 'us' denotes all the devotees of Sri Bhagavan, yet when it is measured with the yardstick given by Sri Muruganar in

devotees of Sri Bhagavan, that the path of Self-enquiry is difficult while the other methods, *japa, dhyana, yoga* and so on, are easy. Let us see how far from true this contention is !

Now, what is the opinion of Sri Bhagavan on this subject ? Let us turn to His own words:

> "...of all paths, this path is the easiest! [45]"
>
> *'Atmavidya Kirtanam'*, verse 4

> "... this is the direct path for all !"
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 17

Thus it is clear that Sri Bhagavan's opinion is that this path of Self-enquiry is not merely the easiest of all paths, but that it is also the easiest and most direct for all aspirants. Some of us, instead of trying to understand, 'Why did Sri Bhagavan say so ? Can there be a justification for His opinion? If so, what is it?', remark evasively, "Ah, it is easy only for Bhagavan, but it is difficult for others," and they

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'Mey Tava Vilakkam' verse 68, "What is declared by others as ' difficult, indeed difficult' is tremendously easy for the devotees of our Lord (Ramana)!", the reader can well understand who among those pointed out by the word 'us' are the true devotees of Sri Bhagavan, and who are those' others'.

45 "To unfasten the bonds of *karma* and so on, end to achieve the destruction of birth and so on, of all paths, this path is the easiest ! If we remain still (that is, if we merely 'be'), without the least action of mind, speech and body, oh what a wonder it will be I The Self-effulgence in the heart will be (known as) the ever-present experience, all fear will cease and the ocean of bliss (will surge) !"

'Atmavidya Kirtanam', verse 4

It should be noted here that in describing His path, Sri Bhagavan uses the superlative 'the easiest'. In other paths, some work or other is prescribed to be done through the mind, speech or body, and hence one may experience some difficulty in using these instruments. But, as no work is given to them in the way of sadhana in the path of Self-enquiry, this is 'the easiest of all path'!

become disheartened and lose courage. In order not to lose this courage, since it is the *sraddha* which alone will secure us the goal, let us try to find the justification in support of the opinion of Sri Bhagavan.

What do we mean when we say that a thing is 'difficult' or that is 'easy'? In fact, what is difficult and what is easy? that which we do not like, that which we cannot do, that which we do not know – that alone we call difficult. That which we already like *(ichcha)*, that which we have already done *(kriya)*, and that which we already know *(jnana)* – that alone we call easy. We therefore come to the following conclusion: those experiences which are already within our power of loving *(ichcha* sakti*)*, power of doing *(kriya sakti)* and power of knowing *(jnana* sakti) are easy. **while those experiences which are not already within our power of loving, power of doing and power of knowing are difficult.** This indeed is the correct definition of what is difficult and what is easy. With this definition, let us now see which of these two is easy: the efforts required for the various spiritual practices like *japa, dhyana, yoga* and so on, or the effort required for Self-enquiry.

As we have already said; the efforts made in the paths of *japa, dhyana, yoga* and so on, are nothing but an attention towards second and third person objects, whereas the effort made in the Self-enquiry taught by Sri Bhagavan is an attention towards the first person. For the practice of *japa, dhyana* or any of the four yogas, it is necessary to use the power of one-pointedness of mind on second and third person objects; using the mind's power in such a way is mere extroversion *(bahirmukham)*. But for Self-enquiry, it is necessary to use the power of one-pointedness of mind in attending to focusing on – the first person, so this alone is

the real introversion *(antarmukham)*. A little analysis will reveal that for every one of us (even for the most ordinary man), the experiences of loving *(ichcha)*, doing *(kriya)* and knowing *(jnana)* towards the first person are not only inherent but also greater than those towards the second and third person objects. Let us see how.

When we are first told about a name of God, a form of God, one of the various attitudes towards God,[46] the places of the six yogic centres in the body, or such like – all of which require efforts of attention towards a second or third person object, they are new to us: new to know, new to love, and new to do. Before being kindled in us by others (whom we take as our gurus), all these experiences of loving, doing and knowing were unknown to us. How?

Suppose either our parents or some elders have initiated us into some name or form of God or a sacred *mantra* like *gayatri*. Before baing initiated. we did not know those *mantras*, *dhayanas* or forms of God. Thus, only after being instructed do we come to know about them, that is, **the experience of knowing** that there are such *mantras*, *dhyanas* and so on is newly acquired by us. In the same way, it is only after hearing from a guru of the greatness, uniqueness and power of such *japas* or *dhyanas* that we gain faith and love for them. This is for us a newly acquired **experience of loving**, in other words, we did not love them before. Similarly, we have never before done those *mantra-japas* or meditations, nor cultivated those feelings of relationship with God. We are able to do *japa* properly – to pronounce the *mantra* in the correct way, to raise or lower

46 Attitudes towards God *(bhavas)*: In dualistic worship, devotees cultivate any one of the different types of relationship with God, such as the love towards a Father, Mother, Husband, Child, Master, Friend, Servant, Guru and so on.

the pitch and to stop at the right place – only after repeating it many times in the presence of the guru and after carrying out his corrections and suggestions. This is for us a newly acquired experience of doing, in other words, we had not done it before. The same applies to meditation, *pranayama, hatha yoga, raja yoga* and so on. Thus, is it not proved that the experiences of loving, doing and knowing pertaining to all these spiritual practices based upon second and third person objects did not exist for us before but are newly acquired by us ?

On the other hand the experiences of loving, doing and knowing pertaining to the first person are already there, inherent in us, without the need of their being kindled by others! How? In chapter two, pages 42 to 44, we have already clearly proved that in everyone the love for oneself is always and naturally far greater than that for second and third person objects. Thus, firstly, the **experience of loving** *(ichchanubhava)* oneself is proved' to be inherent in us. Secondly, every day in sleep we are able to separate ourself easily, effortlessly and naturally from the feeling 'I am the body', which is not 'we'. This ability of thus separating ourself proves that the **experience of remaining** *(kriyanubhava)* as Self is inherent in us. Thirdly, let us suppose that a person Is sitting alone In an absolutely dark room where he cannot see even his own body. If someone asks from outside the room, "Is my book near you ?", he replies, "I do not know of its existence", But if asked, "Do you exist !', quick comes his reply, "Why, certainly I exist!". He is able to know his own existence by his Self-light (Self-consciousness) even when he does not have the help of the light which is necessary to know the existence of second and third person objects. Moreover, since everyone has the

experience of the knowledge 'I am' even in deep sleep[47], where the body and mind do not exist, it is evident that the knowledge of our own existence is inherent in us, whereas the knowledge of second and third person objects is not. These two examples prove that the **experience of knowing** *(jnananubhava)* one's own existence is inherent even in the most ordinary man. If Sri Bhagavan advises us to like a thing for which we do not already have a liking, we may say it is difficult. If He asks us to know a thing so far' un-known to us, we may then say it is difficult. If He wants us to be in a state which we have not reached before and thereby have not experienced before, then it may be considered difficult. But since we have come to know thus – that the experiences of loving, of doing and of knowing are already clear and inherent in us only with regard to the first person, when viewed in the light ot the above. mentioned definition of 'easy' and difficult', one can plainly see that the effort made in the path of Self-enquiry, which is an attention towards the first person, is far easier than that made in *japa, dhyana, yoga* and so on, which are nothing but attention towards second and third person objects. Such indeed is the justification in support of the sayings of Sri Bhagavan. "Of all paths. this path is' the easiest ?" and, "This is the direct path for all!", it was in this connection that Sri Bhagavan used to say repeatedly, "Self is here and now, and ever -attained". By saying, **"This is the direct path for all"**, Sri Bhagavan points out that anyone, however weak his mind may be, can acquire through this path that true strength of mind which is required to abide

47 It has already been explained on pages 61 to 62 that every one is aware of his existence in sleep, It is wrong for anyone to say either that one does not exist in sleep, or that one does not know one's, existence in sleep, Refer also to *'Maharshi's Gospel'*, Book II, chapter V (8th edition, pages 86 to 87; 9th edition, pages 89 to 90).

in one's source. Therefore, taking to Self-attention *(aha-mukham)*, which is the real introversion *(antar-mukham)*, is by itself far better than giving any other target to the mind – such is the unique greatness of Sri Bhagavan's teaching !

> "Except (the effort made in) the path of enquiring in to the ego, no amount of effort made as enjoined in other paths such as *karma, (yoga* and so on,) will enable you to obtain and enjoy' Self, the treasure in the heart !"
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Koval'*, verse 885

Moreover, can God be one of the second or third person objects? No, He cannot be ! Because,

> "The second and third persons live only because of the root, the first person (the ego) .. ."
>
> *'Atma Vichara Patikam"*, verse 6[48]

> "Only if that first person (the ego) in the form 'I am the body' exists, will the second and third persons exist..."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 14

> "If there is no 'I'-thought, no other thing will exist ..."
>
> *'Sri Arunachala Ashtakam'*, verse 7

- such is the experience of Sri Bhagavan. That is, for their existence the second and third persons have to depend upon the first person (the false ego), which rises in the form of a thought, 'I am this body'. Therefore, if God were one of the second or third persons, He would have to depend upon the grace of the ego for His existence! Now if God, who is the very form of existence *(sat)*, had to depend upon

48 See appendix one (a)

something else for His existence, then would it not mean that He is devoid of Godhood? Thus, God can never be one of the second or third persons, He must then certainly exist and shine as the source of and base for the rising of this false first person, that is, **as the reality (the real aspect) of the first person.** Since God or *Brahman* is thus always shining as the reality of 'I', giving the mind the practice of attending to Self is the only true seeking of God and the only effective yoga. Hence, **Self-attention is the true God-attention!**

> "O Bhagavan, meditating upon You is nothing other than contemplating 'I', Contemplating 'I' is nothing other than remaining without thought, Remaining without thought is nothing other than being vigilantly attentive not to rise as 'I', But why even attend, when my very existence *(sat)* is itself attention *(chit)* ?"
>
> *'Sri Ramana Sahasram'*, verse 990

Since we have already found (in the first sentence of chapter three) that 'I am' (Self) is perfect happiness, and since we now find that God, the ocean of perfect happiness, shines as the reality of the first person, if we enquire into Self and know what we really are, thus negating all the non-Self (i.e. what we really are not), That which ever exists *(sat)* will shine *(chit)* as it is. Then will not all the efforts to be made through other spiritual practices, as enjoined in the sastras, to remove the miseries (the ever non-existent bondage) become unnecessary? So, let us now examine the method of Self-enquiry, the Maha Yoga which enables us to separate from the non-Self and to know **ourself.**

CHAPTER

6

"Who Am I?' is not Soham Bhavana[49]

Before filling a tub with water, do we not carefully look for any holes and outlets, and plug them? Otherwise, most of our efforts to fill it will be in vain. Similarly, before we start to explain **the technique of Self-enquiry,** it is necessary to find out the many ways in which it should not be practiced, and to dismiss the various wrong ways in which it has already been understood and practiced up till now.

There is a difference between the technique of the Self-enquiry revealed by Sri Bhagavan and that of the Self-enquiry which we have learnt from the sastras all this time. For ages past the sastras have been declaring, "Who are you" You are not the body, *prana,* mind, intellect, ego or the like; you are Self *(atman);* you are consciousness, which is Self". However, they do not go beyond telling us, "Eliminate the five sheaths, which are non-Self, as 'not I" not I' *(neti, neti)".* They do not explain who is to eliminate or the practical method how to eliminate, nor do they give in a precise and direct manner the proper clues to eliminate

49 *Soham bhavana* is the meditation 'I am He' (that is, 'I am God or Brahman')

the non-Self.[50] That is why even those who have made an extensive study of Vedanta are found to be devoid of the practical experience of *jnana*, which is the loss of the ego, the 'I am the body' – consciousness *(dehatma-buddhi)*. This is not only the case with those who study the sastras and yet are not given to practice, but it is also the case with those earnest seekers who are sincerely attempting to put into practice what they have learnt from the sastras; though they repeatedly struggle in their thwarted- attempts, they are not able to achieve the direct experience of the non-dual knowledge. On the other hand, *jnanis*, who art permanently established in the natural Self-consciousness, assert, "That experience of Self is here, now and ever-attained"! The reason why Sri Bhagavan and those of His disciples who came to Him solely for the experience of Self-knowledge rejoice and exclaim, "Ah ! Knowing Self is the easiest thing! Indeed, it is the easiest!", must be that on the path of Self-enquiry some new clue which is refined and easy to put into practice has been given by Sri Bhagavan. Let us see what this clue is.

'The body is not I; who am I? I am He !' *(deham naham: koham? soham !)* – this is the quintessence of the Self-enquiry found in the sastras, to facilitate which they lay down the following four practices *(sadhanas)*:-

1. Discrimination *(viveka)* between the eternal and the ephemeral.

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50 Sastras can help only so far, in former times, after studying the sastras, aspirants used to seek the company *(sat-sang)* of a jnana-Guru and serve Him with great faith and love; then, after the secret clues had been revealed by the Guru, the aspirants were able to find out the correct way of eliminating the non-Self (the five sheaths).

2. Desirelessness *(vairagya)* towards the various enjoyments in this world and in any other world.

3. The six virtues[51] of tranquility *(sama)* and so on.

4. Intense yearning for liberation *(mumukshutva)*.

Because an aspirant comes to know through the discrimination between the eternal and the ephemeral that liberation is the only eternal Thing *(nitya vastu)*, he gains intense yearning for liberation and, having thereby acquired desirelessness towards all other enjoyments, he puts forth his efforts in the practice of the six virtues of tranquility and so on. Therefore, in the third *sadhana*, the six virtues, the sastras give him all the aids they can for the attainment of Self-knowledge. Thus, when he puts forth his efforts in this third *sadhana*, is it not clear that he has already completed the first, second and fourth *sadhanas* ?

Controlling the sense-organs and the organs of action through desirelessness *(vairagya)* and trying to fix the

51 The six virtues:(a) Tranquility *(sama)* means fixing the mind upon its target, with the help of the desirelessnes arising out of repeated reflection upon the defects of worldly objects.

(b) Restraint of the senses *(dama)* means controlling the sense-organs end organs of action and thereby preventing them from leaving their respective places.

(c) Withdrawal from activities *(uparati)* means fixing the mind on its target so firmly that it is not led by previous tendencies to dwell upon objects, end thereby giving up all unnecessary activities.

(d) Forbearance *(titiksha)* means courageously enduring any amount of misery that may befell one, without trying to avoid it or grieving over it.

(e) Faith *(sraddha)* means an unshakable conviction that only the words of Vedanta sastras and those of the Guru are true.

(f) Contemplation *(samadhi)* means preventing the mind by all efforts from wandering according to its nature, and fixing II only on Brahman.

wavering mind on Brahman are the two essential points among the six items of the third *sadhana*. But while practising, what exactly does a ripe and tremendously earnest aspirant do? His main practice can only be to fight with desires for sense, objects and to think about a second or third person thing which he thinks to be 'Brahman', the absolute Reality. For this, the only aids given to him by the sastras are the *mahavakyas* such as 'I am Brahman' *(aham brahmasmi)*, 'I am He' *(soham)* and 'That thou art' *(tat twam asi)*. When meditation *(bhavana)* upon the *mahavakyas* is practised, the efforts of the aspirant are merely flowing in the form of a thought, 'This I is that Brahman', towards a second or third person. This thought is only a **mental activity** *(mano-vritti)*, In these meditations, 'I am Brahman' or 'I am That', **what he feels as 'I' is nothing but the mind**, which he takes to be himself, Because, he who now meditates is the first thought, which has risen only after sleep came to an end, while the Brahman on which he meditates is a third person object, which can come into existence only after his rising. So long as the ego (the 'I am the body'-consciousness) lasts, when one hears the word 'Brahman' one can only take it to denote one of the second or third persons and not any other thing (i, e. not the first person feeling), because in the sentence 'I am Brahman', since 'I' is already there to denote the first person, the word 'Brahman' can only be taken to mean either a second or a third person. **When closely scrutinized, meditations such as 'I am He' or 'I am Brahman' are thus found to be nothing but an activity of the mind diverging towards a second or third person.** There is therefore a vast difference (as between a mountain and a valley) between these meditations, which are mental activities, and the Self-attention taught by Bhagavan Sri Ramana, which is a stillness of mind! Let us see how.

While practising the meditation 'I am Brahman' the first person feeling roused by the words 'I am' is at once disturbed by the word' Brahman' and diverted into a **second or third person feeling.** Solely to avoid this trouble, in His work *Who am I!?'* Bhagavan Sri Ramana has said, **"Even if one incessantly thinks 'I, I', it will lead to that place** (the state of Brahman)", If while threading a needle the two strands of the thread remain apart, even the one strand which enters the eye of the needle will be pulled out by the other. Similarly, when one meditates 'I am Brahman', even the first person feeling roused by the words 'I am' is disturbed (instead of being allowed to remain in Self. abidance, *atma-nishtha)* and pulled outwards by the word Brahman', since this word creates a second or third person feeling. The aspirant mistakes this subtle activity of his mind thus going on within him from the first person feeling to the second person feeling, and from the second person feeling to the first person feeling, to be Self-enquiry *(atma-vichara) !* When, on account of such a subtle activity, the mind sometimes lies at rest in sheer exhaustion, the aspirant mistakes this quiescence of his mind *(mano-laya)* to be Self-realization *(jnana-samadhi)"* If this were really Self-realization, the, I am the body-identification could not revive when he wakes up; and unless the body-identification were to revive, he could not resume the thread of the meditation 'I am Brahman'. But, since the aspirant resumes meditating as soon as he wakes up, does it not prove that what he achieved through that meditation was a mere laya, a sleep-like rest ? After waking up from a dream, one can in no way again identify the dream-body as 'I' : in the same manner, after awakening to Self-conscious (Self-realization), the *jnani* will not meditate' I am Brahman',

since the ego is known to be false. Hence, Sri Bhagavan fittingly asks:

> "...Since we are ever That, why should we for ever be meditating that we are That? Does a man meditate 'I am a man' ?"
>
> *Ulladhu Narpadhu* " verse 36

Does a man come to know that he is a man only by meditating 'I am a man, I am a man'? Certainly not! Thus, since the aspirant again starts meditating 'I am Brahman' it is evident that the state in which he found himself temporarily was not Self-realization – the real waking !

It will be worthwhile to note in this context the following conversation between Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Totapuri. When Sri Totapuri said, "This brass vessel will shine bright only if it is polished daily; so also, only by meditating [upon these *bhavanas]* daily, will our mind remain pure to reflect *Brahman"*, Sri Ramakrishna remarked, "Why to polish if the vessel is gold !"

Thus, the meditations' I am He', 'I am Brahman', 'I am That' *(soham, aham brahmasmi, tat aham)* and the like are nothing but activities of the mind – *pravrittis.* But for Self-realization, this mind must be destroyed without leaving a trace. By engaging in such meditations, the mind will live for any number of ages, because activity is the food on which and by which the mind lives. It is only the attention to second and third persons that nourishes the mind. Therefore, since the mind is not annihilated by the meditations such as 'I am He' it will be kept alive for ever either by doing these meditations or by' lapsing into quiescence *(laya)* whenever it is totally exhausted by such activities. Hence, because they do not bring about the

annihilation of the mind, **these meditations cannot be the Self-enquiry taught by Sri Bhagavan,** which destroys the mind once and for all.

> "...Other than this, meditating 'am not this, I am That' may be (in some way) an aid, but can it itself be the enquiry ?"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu',*. verse 28

– thus asks Sri Bhagavan! How these meditations may be an aid, but cannot themselves be the enquiry' will be explained in the appropriate place at the end of this chapter.

Sri Bhagavan does not take these meditations to be Self–enquiry. **Self-attention in the form 'Who am I ?' alone is the teaching of Sri Ramana.** The method of enquiry of Sri Ramana is an attention intensely fixed on the first person, 'What is this I?', rather than meditating 'I am this' or 'I am that', Knowing well that any activity given to the mind in the form of an attention to the second and third persons (like *japa*, *dhyana*, etc.) will not destroy it, and in order to fulfill the aim of the *mahavakyas*, **Sri Bhagavan breathes a new life into the sastras by means of His teaching, 'Who am I?'.** A revelation which was not disclosed before now through the sastras and which is essential for an aspirant to be able to practise Self-enquiry without losing his way, has now been added to the world of sastras by Sri Bhagavan. What is this revelation? **The mind is destroyed only when it turns towards the first person!**

Divine lights, divine sounds, heavens such *as* Kailas, visions of God in form!; such as Siva, the six yogic centres such as *muladhara* imagined in the body – since these and all other similar objects of the senses are objects perceived by the subtle mind through the subtle five senses, they are

nothing but second and third person knowledges *(drisya* or the seen), and none of them can be the first person knowledge *(drik* or the seer) ! Moreover, when the mind itself, which is an aggregate of thoughts, is a second person object perceived by us, what else can the objects perceived by it be other than second or third persons? Therefore, the attention of the aspirant should be focused only on Self, which always shines (even when the mind is not), and should be kept there without being allowed to be diverted towards any second or third person object.

> "To think of second and third persons is sheer foolishness, for by thinking of second and third persons the mental activities *(mano-vrittis)* will wax. (On the other hand) attending to the first person is equal to committing suicide, for only by enquiring into the first person will the ego itself die."
>
> *'Atma vichara Patikam'*, verse 7

This is no ordinary clue. When aspirants (even those who, with intense desirelessness and a steady power of one-pointedness while attending to any undertaking, have been struggling for countless ages, through ever so many births and deaths, since, not knowing the proper direction in which to make efforts, they have been attending to the useless second and third persons) are puzzled at not finding a solution, this clue of first person attention given by Bhagavan Sri Ramana will surely be valued by them as priceless, like a heap of diamonds put into the hands of a poor man. Not only has Sri Bhagavan revealed this clue, but He has also given in His invaluable, appealing, simple and small work *'Who am I?'* the exact practical process of Self-enquiry to help even beginners to fix their mind on

Self alone, without allowing it to stray towards second and third persons, This process will be found well explained in the following chapters.

A treasure, though hidden under the floor of our own house, is as if non-existent for us until we come to know about it, dig it out and enjoy it – just like the herb[52] that was discovered by the doctor in the patient's own garden. If some one makes us aware of the existence of the treasure and enables us to dig it out and to enjoy it then he is truly the one who has given it to us anew. In fact, it is he alone who has made us rich; before that we were certainly poor. However there are some among us who have not been able to gain the experience of Self in spite of having read about Self-enquiry in the sastras, yet who, not knowing the invaluable help, the greatness and the novelty of the technique of Self-enquiry taught by Sri Bhagavan, ask superficially, "Self-enquiry is already mentioned in the sastras; what new discovery has been made by Sri Bhagavan ?". This is similar to the poor man saying, "Was not this treasure already there in my own house ?", though he did

52 **The story of the herb**: Some friends of a patient who had been suffering from an incurable disease for a long time and who was on his deathbed, brought a new doctor to him. After diagnosing the disease, the doctor walked about here and there in the patient's garden and plucked a herb, by the application of which the long-standing disease was at once cured ! All were wonder-struck at this and expressed their gratitude to the doctor with words of praise, "it is you alone who have given him life !" Though that herb was there all the time in the patient's own garden, his sufferings did not end. Was not the doctor's discovery and application of the herb as good as giving life itself to the patient ? Suppose either the patient or some of his friends were to say, not fully realizing the importance of the doctor's help, "After all, what has he done ? This herb was all the time in our garden", this would be exactly like the words of those who say, "Self-enquiry is already mentioned in the sastras; what new discovery has been made by Bhagavan Sri Ramana ?"

not know about it and thus could not dig it out and enjoy it, **The reason why we say that it is similar to the statement or the poor man** is that had he gained that immense treasure, known its value and experienced its joy, he would no longer be a poor man and hence he would not have spoken so belittlingly about his friend's invaluable help! Only those pandits who have mastered the mere letter of the ancient sastras, but have never experienced even a fringe of the bliss of Self through the Self-enquiry taught there, can speak in such a way, since they do not know the unique greatness of **the clue** discovered and given to the world by Sri Ramana, the *Sadguru,* for following the path of Self-enquiry. If they had found the correct method of practising Self-enquiry by studying the sastras for all these years, why then should they still be struggling and not obtaining the experience of Self? In striking contrast to this, all those who have known the Reality through the great help of the clue given by Sri Bhagavan were almost ignorant of the ancient sastras !

The consciousness 'I am' when felt along with an adjunct *(upadhi)* as 'I am so-and-so' becomes a thought. Of all thoughts, this thought is the first. But the consciousness which shines alone as 'I-I' without any adjunct is Self *(atman)* or the Absolute *(brahman).* This is not a thought. It is our 'being' (that is, our true existence)[53]. Therefore, the purpose of the *mahavakya* 'I am Brahman" taught by the sastras is to give us a prior information about the final experience that Brahman is our pure existence, and not to convert Brahman into one of our thoughts. Thus, 'I am Brahman' is only a prior intimation of our true state, which we are yet to reach. Can our existence, which is beyond

53 This will be fully explained in the next chapter, 'Self-enquiry '.

thought, be reached by thought? Since it cannot be thought of, to put an end to the rising of the 'I' – thought through the enquiry 'Who am I ?' (i,e. through Self-attention' and to abide as what remains after is the true implementation of the *mahavakya* 'I am Brahman'.

> "...Since the Reality ('I') exists within, beyond thought, who can and how to meditate upon that Reality, which is called the Heart? To abide in the Heart as It is (that is, without thought) is truly meditating (upon It) I Thus should *you* know."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu', benedictory* verse 1

Until one gains the true experience of Brahman (*Brahman-bhava),* in whatever way one may meditate on Brahman, it will only be a thought about a second or third person, But instead, if one simply meditates 'I, I', since it is a first person attention, the 'I' thought which has thus started to meditate will drown in its source and lose its form and separate existence, just like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre and like the reflection of the sun directed from a mirror towards the sun itself. Thus, If one takes to meditating 'I am Siva' *(sivoham)* or 'I am He' *(soham)* and so on, the ego will wax and grow strong[54], whereas if one attends to Self, 'Who am I ?', the ego will die. **That is why Bhagavan Sri Ramana did not teach 'I am He' (soham) as practice (sadhana).** If some particulars about a town which we want to reach have been given to us beforehand, they will be a good aid; similarly, the prior information (given to us by the *mahavakya*, such as 'I am Brahman') that our final reality is Brahman may be a good aid, but can it be the

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54 "Man misbehaves, acting without restraint and as he pleases, even when he only imagines 'I am this trifling body', If he were to imagine 'I am Brahman Himself', of what evil would he then be incapable!"

'Guru Ramana Vachana Mala', verse 149

practice – the enquiry itself? No, it cannot ! How? Studying the particulars about the town, reading them repeatedly to learn them by heart and meditating upon them can never be the journey to that place: the same is the case with the *mahavakyas !* This is exactly what Sri Bhagavan meant when he wrote:

> "...meditating 'I am not this, I am That' may be (in some way) an aid, but can it itself be the enquiry ?"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 29

and:

> "...meditating 'We are That' may be a good aid for (reminding) us to abide as Self..."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 36

Therefore, the path of enquiry, 'Who am I?' is not the meditation upon the *mahavakyas* such as 'I am He'.

We often hear about some lecturers who neither have had the good fortune of being taught by the gracious Glance of Sri Bhagavan's Eyes, those two flames of *Jnana* which easily reveal this truth, nor have the willingness to scrutinize thoroughly His teachings, but who, after reading *'Upadesa Saram'* and taking only the later part of the 8th verse," 'I am He' is better than all other meditations", start propagating that Bhagavan Ramana also teaches only the meditation 'I am He'. It is therefore necessary to scrutinize this point a little deeper. The Tamil work **'Upadesa Undhiyar'**[55] is the original from which the Sanskrit

55 This work can be correctly understood only when viewed in the light of the context in which and the object with which it was composed, *'Upadesa Undhiyar,'* is so named because it is the instructions, *upadesa*, composed in a Tamil metre called *undhiyar.* When Sri Bhagavan translated this work from His original Tamil into Sanskrit.

'Upadesa Saram' was translated, The correct meaning of the 8th verse will become clear if we know in what context and with what purpose Sri Bhagavan composed *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*,

Sri Muruganar the whole-hearted disciple of Sri Bhagavan and a great Tamil poet, while writing *'Sri Ramana Sannidhi Murai'*, in which he describes the play of Lord Siva with His devotees was narrating in a metre called *undhiyar* the story of the dwellers in the Daruka forest in ancient days, who were performing ritualistic practices and who, on account of their deceitful egoism, had become immensely conceited, feeling that there is no God except *kamya karmas*[56]. Thus, Sri Muruganar came to the point where Lord Siva gives them instructions *(upadesa)* to correct them and to show them the right path; he then realized that Bhagavan Sri Ramana, who is Arunachala Siva Himself was the only proper authority to impart the spiritual advice of Lord Siva, and therefore requested Him to complete the

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It was named *'Upadesa Saram'*, which means 'The Essence *of* Instructions'; it is also under this title that the English translations of *'Upadesa Undhiyar'* have been published.

Not knowing the context in which this work was originally composed by Sri Bhagavan, many on first reading the title assume the work to be the essence of Sri Ramana's instructions and that He composed it of His own accord for the benefit of the world. However, after reading the next paragraph, where it will be explained why and in what context Sri Bhagavan composed this work, the reader will understand that He started to write it not as the essence of His own instructions (i.e. Self-enquiry), but as the essence of the instructions given in ancient days by Lord Siva. It will also be clear that, as in the case of all His other works, *'Upadesa Undhiyar'* was not composed of His own accord but at the request of *a* devotee.

56 *Kamya karmas:* any action performed for the fulfilment of desires. In this context, it refers to the performance of rituals, instructions concerning which are found in the *'Purva Mimamsa'*, a portion of the Vedas.

story by writing the instructions in the remaining thirty verses allotted in the work. Hence, in continuation of the *story*, Bhagavan Ramana started to compose "*Upadesa Undhiyar*', the instructions given by Lord Siva to the dwellers in the Daruka forest in those days. In the first two verses, actions performed with desire *(kamya karmas)* are condemned; from verses 3 to 16 (thirteen verses in all) Sri Bhagavan has summed up all that has been said up till now in the sastras about the three paths, *nishkamya karma*, *bhakti* and *raja yoga*. Within these fifteen verses, the path of knowledge *(jnana marga)* is not at all mentioned by Sri Bhagavan. After giving instructions about *puja* and *japa* from verses 3 to 6, Sri Bhagavan describes the ancient methods of meditation in their order of priority in verses 7 and 8 – and it is only in this context that it is said (in the 8th verse), "To meditate 'I am He' is better than meditating upon Him (God) as an other". Because Sri Bhagavan was requested to recount the essence of the instructions that Lord Siva gave in ancient days to the dwellers in the Daruka forest, it became necessary for Him to summarize the ancient paths also. Therefore, verses 3 to 15 (which are the teachings of Lord Siva) should not be taken to be the teachings based upon the direct experience of Sri Bhagavan. Self-enquiry alone is the direct teaching or Sri Bhagavan.

Some may ask, "All right, the meditation 'I am He' may not be the actual teaching of Sri Bhagavan, but does not the 9th verse, 'By the strength of such meditation, remaining in one's true existence, which is beyond the range of meditation, is the very nature of supreme devotion', imply that liberation, which is the supreme devotion, can be attained by the strength of such meditation?" Now, let us see what, in the course of an aspirant's practice, the strength of such meditation is, and what changes take place in him

through that strength. Throughout the time the aspirant was practising the ancient methods described in verses 3 to 7, such as puja, meditation and so on, his mind was imagining God to be a second or third person object. The reason why the meditation 'I am He' was prescribed was to remove this ignorance and to help the aspirant gain full faith in the words of this *mahavakya* and thereby to give him the firm conviction 'God is indeed the reality of the first person'. The strength of such conviction **is the strength of meditation *(bhava bala)* referred to in verse 9**. However, why take to this round-about path to gain the conviction that God or Brahman is the reality of the first person ! Since the ritualists in the Daruka forest were stranded on a dead-end route, they had to be led only through such a roundabout path by Lord Siva. But, as soon as we hear the instruction of Sri Bhagavan in verse 14 of *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, "Only if the first person exists, will the second and third persons exist", why not we at once be convinced, 'The second and third persons live only because of the root, the first person'[57], and turn directly towards Self ? In order to bring back ultimately those aspirants who do not come to His path but direct their efforts towards second and third persons, Sri Bhagavan recommended this as the best of all the ancient methods of meditation since, as a prior information, it acts as an aid for the aspirants to turn that attention towards the first person. Suppose the owner of the cow which is tied in the other man's shed comes many times to pet it and feed it, thus making it familiar and acquainted with him, the cow will develop the conviction that he is its master; then, after it has gained the strength

57 Here, to refresh his memory, the reader is referred to the last paragraph of chapter five, beginning : "Moreover, can God be...", pages 103 to 104.

of conviction *(bhava bala)* that he is its master, when he brings it to its own shed it will agree to stay there only because of its prior familiarity with him.

The simile of the wasp and the grub[58] mentioned in 'the sastras is meant only to illustrate the process by which the aspirant gains this strength of conviction during his practice. It should not be taken to mean that the individual soul becomes Brahman through thinking – because the state of Brahman is not a thing to be newly created from some other thing (as a wasp is created from a grub). It is our natural state, undergoing no change.

> "This existence (i.e. Brahman) – Thy Feet, O Ramana – is not a thing to go and unite with another thing, not a thing to become another thing, not a thing to be bored of, not a thing to be destroyed, not a thing to rise and set on any account !..."
>
> *'Sri Ramana Sahasram'*, verse 233

Therefore, would it be in accordance with the eternal nature of the perfect state of Brahman to say that something can newly become That?

> "Even the contention held that there is duality during practice and non-duality after attainment is not true..."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 37

After the conviction 'My true existence-consciousness is God or Brahman' has been well stabilized in an aspirant

58 The simile of the wasp and the grub *(bramara kitaka nyaya)* : A certain variety of Indian wasp brings a grub and keeps it in its nest; whenever the wasp comes back to the nest it stings the grub, which in due course turns into a wasp. It is believed that the grub becomes a wasp because of constantly thinking of it through fear.

through the strength of such meditation, at an opportune moment the knowledge 'Do I not always exist! Why then should I meditate in order to exist ?' will flash, and thus his attention will be drawn back all of a sudden and fixed on his existence-consciousness. This Self-attention is exactly the technique *of* Self-enquiry. Since through this Self-attention the meditation 'I am Brahman' has now become unnecessary; the aspirant remains in his true existence, 'I am' *(aham asmi)*, which is the state of thought free consciousness; this is what is mentioned in verse 9. At any rate, what has to take place finally in the aspirant is Self-attention, which is the Self-enquiry taught by Sri Bhagavan. This love towards Self *(swatma-bhakti)* is the very nature of supreme devotion *(parabhokti tattva,* as mentioned in verse 9), and that is liberation.

Then from verse 16 to 29 Sri Bhagavan expounds the path of knowledge. Even here, a subtle difference should be noted between the way of teaching of the sastras and that of Sri Bhagavan. First, in verses 16 to 20, Sri Bhagavan explains clearly the method of doing the enquiry 'Who am I ?' (attending to Self). Then, after giving us the understanding in verse 21[59] that the real Thing denoted by the word 'I' is Self itself, He asserts His verdict that, since the truth of 'I' is Self:

> "The body, *prana,* mind, Intellect end the darkness of ignorance - all these (five sheaths), being insentient *(jada)* and non-existent *(asat), are* not 'I', that which exists *(sat).'*
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 22

59 "This ('I-I', that is, Self) is always (in all the three-states and all the three divisions of 'time) the true import of the word 'I', because even in sleep, where there is no ego- 'I', we are not non-existent."

'Upadesa Undhiyar', verse 21

In ancient sastras the process of Self-enquiry is described as negating the five sheaths as 'not I, not I' *(neti, neti)*. However, aspirants struggle not knowing how to do so. That is why Sri Bhagavan first gives us (in verses 16 to 20) the technique of attending to Self, which is the means to know what 'I' really is,' then He points out in verse 22 that negating the five sheaths is the outcome of knowing the real 'I', He thus implies that attending to 'I', Self, is itself the method of negating the five sheaths, the non- Self. Hence, in *'Upadesa Undhiyar'* Sri Bhagavan has amended the path of knowledge *(jnana marga)* by rearranging the back-to-front process described in ancient sastras into a new and practical order – that is, that which was given as the practice *(neti, neti)* is now pointed out to be the result I. Thus, from verse 16 to 29, Sri Bhagavan teaches that the enquiry 'Who am I?' is the correct path of knowledge, and concludes *'Upadesa Undhiyar'* by declaring in verse 30 that the only right *tapas* is to know and remain in Self, and not anything else.

CHAPTER

Self-enquiry

On hearing the expression 'Self-enquiry' *(atma-vichara),* people generally take it to mean either enquiring into Self or enquiring about Self. But how to do so? Who is to enquire into Self, or who is to enquire about Self? What does enquiry actually mean? Such questions naturally arise, do they not?

As soon as we hear the terms *'Atma-vlchara'* or *'Brahma--vichara',* many of us naturally consider that there is some sort of effulgence or a formless power within our body and that we are going to find out what it is, where it is, and how it is. This idea is not correct. Because, Self *(atman)* does not exist as an object to be known by us who seek to know it ! Since Self shines as the very nature of him who tries to know it! Self-enquiry does not mean enquiring into a second or third person object. It is in order to make us understand this from the very beginning that Bhagavan Ramana named Self-enquiry as 'Who am I ?', thus drawing our attention directly to the first person. In this question, 'Who am I?', 'I am' denotes Self and 'who' stands for the enquiry.

Who is it that is to enquire into Self? For whom is this enquiry necessary? Is it for Self? No, Since Self is the ever-attained, ever-pure, ever-free and ever-blissful Whole, It will

not do any enquiry, nor does it need to ! All right, then it is only the ego that needs to do the enquiry. Can this ego know Self? As said in the previous chapters, this ego is a false appearance, having no existence of its own. It is a petty infinitesimal feeling of 'I' which subsides and loses its form in sleep. So, can Self become an object that could be known by the ego? No, the ego cannot know Self! Thus, when it turns out that **Self-enquiry is unnecessary for Self and Self-knowledge is impossible for the ego**, the questions arise: "What then is the practical method of doing Self-enquiry? Why is this term 'Self-enquiry' found in the sastras ?" Are we not to scrutinize thus and find out? Let us do so.

There is a difference between the sense in which the term 'enquiry' is used by Sri Bhagavan and the way in which the sastras use it. The sastras advocate negating the five sheaths, namely the body, *prana*, mind, intellect and the darkness of ignorance, as 'not I, not I' *(neti, neti)*. But who is to negate them, and how? If the mind (or the intellect) is to negate them, it can at best negate only the insentient physical body and the *prana*, which are objects seen by it. Beyond this, how can the mind negate itself, its own form? And when it cannot even negate itself, how can it negate the other two sheaths, the intellect *(vijnana-maya kosa)* and the darkness of ignorance *(anandamaya kosa)*, which are beyond its range of perception? During the time of enquiry, therefore, what more can the mind do to remain as Self except to repeat mentally, "I am not this body, I am not this *prana*"? From this, it is clear that 'enquiry' is not a process of one thing enquiring about another thing. That is why the enquiry 'Who am I?' taught by Sri Bhagavan should be taken to mean Self-attention (that is, attention merely to the first person, the feeling 'I').

The nature of the mind is to attend always to things other than itself, that is, to know only second and third persons. If the mind in this way attends to a thing, it means that it is clinging (attaching itself) to that thing. **Attention itself is attachment!** Since the mind is to think about the body and *prana* – though with the intention of deciding 'this is not!, this is not!' such attention is only a means of becoming attached to them and it cannot be a means of negating them! This is what is experienced by any true aspirant in his practice. Then what is the secret hidden in this?

Since, whether we know it or not, **Self**, which is now wrongly considered by us to be unknown, **is verily our reality,** the very nature of our (the Supreme Self's) attention itself is Grace *(anugraha)*. This means that whatever thing we attend to, witness*, observe or look at, that thing is

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* The practice of witnessing thoughts and events, which is much recommended nowadays by lecturers and writers, was never even in the least recommended by Sri Bhagavan, Indeed, whenever He was asked what should' be done when thoughts rise (that is, when attention is diverted towards second or third persons) during *sadhana*, He always replied in the same manner as He had done to Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai in '*Who* am I?', where He says, "If other thoughts rise, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire 'To whom did they rise?'. What does it matter however many thoughts rise? At the very moment that each thought rises, if one vigilantly enquires 'To whom did this rise ?', it will be known 'To me'. If one then enquires 'Who am I?', the mind (our power of attention) will turn back (from the thought) to its source (Self)". Moreover, when He says later in the same work, "Not attending to what-is-other (that is, to any second or third person) is non-attachment *(vairagya)* or desirelessness *(nirasa)*", we should clearly understand that attending to (witnessing, watching, observing or seeing) anything other than Self is itself attachment, and when we understand thus we will realize how meaningless and impractical are such instructions as 'Watch all thoughts and events with detachment' or 'Witness your thoughts, but be not attached to them', which are taught by the so-called gurus of the present day.

nourished and will flourish, being blessed by Grace. Though one now thinks that one is an individual soul, since one's power of attention is in fact nothing but a reflection of the 'knowing-power' *(chit-sakti)* of Self, that on which it falls or is fixed is nourished by Grace and flourishes more and more! Hence, when the power of attention of the mind is directed more and more towards second and third person objects, both the strength *(kriya-bala)* to attend to those objects and the ignorance – the five sense-knowledges in the form of thoughts about them – will grow more and more, and will never subside! Have we not already said that all our thoughts are nothing but attention paid to second and third person objects? Accordingly, the more we attend to the mind, the thoughts which are the forms (the second and third person objects) of the world, the more they will multiply and be nourished. This is indeed an obstacle. The more our attention – the glance of Grace *(anugraha-drishti)* – falls on it, the more the mind's wavering nature and its ascendancy will increase. That is why it is impossible for the mind to negate anything by thinking[60] 'I am not this, I am not this' *(neti, neti)*.- On the other hand, if our (Self's) attention is directed only towards ourself, our knowledge of our existence alone is nourished, and since the mind is not attended to, it is deprived of its strength, the support of our Grace. "Without use when left to stay, iron and mischief rust away" – in accordance with this Tamil proverb, since they are not attended to, all the 'vasana-seeds, whose nature is to rise stealthily and mischievously, have to stay quiet, and

60 This is why aspirants who, in order to destroy evil thoughts like lust, anger and so on, fight against them and thereby think about them fail in their attempts, while aspirants practising Self-enquiry, who pay their full attention to Self with an indifference towards their thoughts, bypass them easily.

thus they dry up like seeds deprived of water and become too weak to sprout out into thought-plants. Then, when the fire of Self-knowledge *(jnana)* blazes forth, these tendencies *(vasanas)*, like well-dried firewood, become a prey to it.

This alone is how the total destruction of all tendencies *(vasanakshaya)* is effected.

If we are told, 'Abandon the east', the practical way of doing so would be to do as if told, 'Go to the west'! In the same manner, when we are told, 'Discard the five sheaths, which are not Self', the practical way of discarding the non-Self is to focus our attention on ourself. 'What is this I?' or 'Who am I?'. Thinking 'I am not this, not this' *(neti, neti)* is a negative method. Knowing that this negative method is just as impractical as saying, 'Drink the medicine without thinking of a monkey'[61] Sri Bhagavan has now shown us the practical way of drinking the medicine without thinking of a monkey, by giving us the clue, 'Drink the medicine while thinking of an elephant', that is, He has reformed the ancient negative method by giving us the positive method 'Who am I?',

> " ... Verily, the ego is all! Hence the enquiry 'What is it?" (in other words, 'Who am I, this ego?')" is the true giving up (renunciation) of all. Thus should you know!"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 28

Verily, all (that is, the five sheaths and their projections – -all these worlds) is the ego. So, attending to the feeling 'I',

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61 There is a traditional story of a doctor prescribing a medicine to a patient with the condition that It should be taken *only* while not thinking of a monkey; but the patient could not take the medicine under this condition, for every time he tried to drink it, the thought of a monkey would surely jump up.

'What is it ?' or 'Who is this I ?', alone is renouncing the five sheaths, discarding them, eliminating them, or negating them. Thus Bhagavan Ramana has declared categorically that Self-attention alone is the correct technique of eliminating the five sheaths !

Since this is so, with what purpose did the sastras use the term 'enquiry' to denote the method *'neti, neti'*? By means of *'neti, neti'*, can we not formulate intellectually (that is, through *paroksha)* the test which we have given in paragraph 4 of chapter four of this book, "A thing is surely not 'I' if it is possible for one to experience 'I am' even in the absence of that thing"? So long as there exists the wrong knowledge 'I am the body' pertaining to the aforesaid five sheaths or three bodies, will not one's paying attention towards the first person automatically be only an attention towards a sheath or a body – a second person ! But if we use this test, can we not find out that all such attentions are not the proper first person attention? Therefore, it is necessary first of all to have an intellectual conviction that these are not 'I' in order to practise Self-attention without losing our bearings. It is only the discrimination[62] by which we acquire this conviction that has been termed 'enquiry' by the sastras. What then is an aspirant to do after discriminating thus? How can the attention to these five sheaths, even though with an intention to eliminate them, be an attention to Self"? Therefore, while practising Self-enquiry, instead of taking anyone of the five sheaths as the object of our attention, we should fix our attention only on the 'I' -consciousness, which exists and shines as oneself, as

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62 The discrimination dealt with in chapter four of this book is also with the same aim in view, yet it is not the actual process of enquiry. What is given in the last chapter of this book alone is the actual method of Self-enquiry.

the singular, and as a witness to and aloof from these sheaths.

Instead of being directed towards any second or third person, is not our power of attention, which was hitherto called mind or intellect, thus now directed only towards the first person? Although we formally refer to it as 'directed', in truth it is not of the nature of a 'doing' *(kriya-rupam)* in the form of directing or being directed; it is of the nature of 'being' or 'existing' *(sat-rupam)*. Because the second and third persons (including thoughts) are alien or external to us, our attention paid to them was of the nature of a 'doing' *(krlya)*. But this very attention, when fixed on the non-alien first person feeling, 'I', loses the nature of 'paying' and remains in the form of 'being', and therefore it is of the nature of non-doing *(akriya)* or inaction *(nishkriya)*. **So long as our power of attention was dwelling upon second and third persons, it was called 'the mind' or 'the intellect', and its attending was called a doing *(kriya)* or an action *(karma)*. Only that which is done by the mind is an action.** But on the other hand, as soon as the attention is fixed on the first person (or Self), it loses its mean names such as mind, intellect or ego sense. Moreover, that attention is no longer even an action, but **inaction** *(akarma)* or the state of 'being still' *(summa iruttal)*. **Therefore, the mind which attends to Self is no more the mind; it is the consciousness aspect of Self *(atma-chit-rupam)*! Likewise, so long as it attends to the second and third persons (the world), it is not the consciousness aspect of Self; It is the mind, the reflected form of consciousness** *(chit-abhasa-rupam)!* Hence, since Self-attention is not a doing *(kriya)*, it is not an action *(karma)*. That is, Self alone realizes Self; the ego does not !

The mind which has obtained a burning desire for Self-attention, which is Self-enquiry, is said to be the fully

mature one *(pakva manas)*. Since it is not at all now inclined to attend to any second or third parson, it can be said that it has reached the pinnacle of desirelessness *(vairagya)*. For, do not all sorts of desires and attachments pertain only to second and third persons? Since this mind, which has very well understood that (as already seen in earlier chapters) the consciousness which shines as 'I' alone is the source of full and real happiness, now seeks Self **because of its natural craving for happiness**, this intense desire to attend to Self is indeed the highest form of devotion *(bhakti)*. **It is exactly this Self-attention of the mind which is thus fully mature through such devotion and desirelessness *(bhakti-vairagya)* that is to be called the enquiry 'Who am I ?' taught by Bhagavan Sri Ramana!** Well, will not at least such a mature mind which has come to the path of Sri Ramana, willingly agreeing to engage in Self-attention, realize Self ? **No, no, it has started for its doom** ! Agreeing to commit suicide, it places its neck (through Self-attention) on the scaffold where it is to be sacrificed !!

How ? Only so long as it was attending to second and third persons did it have the name 'mind', but as soon as Self-attention is begun, its name and form (its name as mind and its form as thoughts) are lost. So we can no longer say that Self-attention or Self-enquiry is performed by the mind, Neither is it the mind that attends to Self, nor is the natural spontaneous Self-attention of the consciousness aspect of Self *(atma-chit-rupam)*, which is not the mind, an activity !

"A naked lie then it would be
If any man were to say that he
Realized the Self, diving within
Through proper enquiry set in,

Not for knowing but for death
The good-for-nothing ego's worth !
'This Arunachala alone,
The Self, by which the Self is known !"

'Sri Arunachala Venba' verse 39

The feeling 'I am' is the experience common to one and all. In this, *'am'* is consciousness or knowledge. This knowledge is not of anything external; it is the knowledge of oneself, This is chit. This consciousness is 'we', "We are verily consciousness", says Sri Bhagavan in *'Upadesa Undhiyar'* verse 23. This is our 'being' (that is, our true existence) or sat. This is called **'that which is'** *(ulladhu)*. Thus in 'I am', 'I' is existence *(sat)* and 'am' is consciousness *(chit)*. When Self, our nature of existence-consciousness *(sat-chit swarupam)*, instead of shining only as the pure consciousness 'I am', shines mixed with an adjunct *(upadhi)* as 'I am a man, I am Rama, I am so-and-so, I am this or that', then **this mixed consciousness is the ego.** This mixed consciousness can rise only by catching hold of a name and form. When we feel 'I am a man, I am Rama, I am sitting, I am lying', is it not clear that we have mistaken the body for 'I', and that we have assumed its name and postures as 'I am this and I am thus'? – The feeling 'this and thus' which has now risen mixed with the pure consciousness 'I am' *(sat-chit)* is what is called **'thought', This is the first thought.**

The feeling 'I am a man, I am so-and-so' is only a thought. **But the consciousness 'I am' is not a thought; it is the very nature of our 'being'.** The mixed consciousness 'I am this or that' is a thought that rises from our 'being'. It is only after the rising of this thought, the mixed consciousness (the first person), that all other thoughts,

which are the knowledge of second and third persons, rise into existence.

> "Only if the first person exists, will the second and third persons exist.."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'* verse 14

This mixed consciousness, the first person, is called our 'rising' or the rising of the ego. This is the primal mentation *(adi-vritti)* ! Hence:

> " Thinking is a mentation *(vritti)* ; being is not a mentation ! ..."
>
> *'Atma Vichara Patikam'*, verse 1

The pure existence-consciousness, 'I am', is not a thought; this consciousness is our nature *(swarupam)*. 'I am a man' is not our pure consciousness; it is only our thought! To understand thus the difference between our 'being' and our 'rising' (that is, between existence and thought) first of all is essential for aspirants who take to the enquiry 'Who am I?',

Bhagavan Sri Ramana has advised that Self-enquiry can be done either in the from 'Who am I?' or in the form 'Whence am I ?', Hearing these two interrogative sentences, many aspirants have held various opinions about them up till now and have become confused as to which of them is to be practised and how! Even among those who consider that both are one and the same, many have only a superficial understanding and have not scrutinized deeply how they are the same. Some who try to follow the former one, 'Who am I ?, simply begin either vocally or mentally the parrot-like repetition 'Who am I ? Who am I ?' as if it

were a *mantra-japa*. This is utterly wrong! Doing *japa* of 'Who am I?' in this manner is just as bad as meditating upon or doing *japa* of the *mahavakyas* such as 'I am Brahman' and so on, thereby spoiling the very objective for which they were revealed! Sri Bhagavan Himself has repeatedly said, "'Who am I?' is not meant for repetition *(japa)*" ! Some others, thinking that they are following the second interrogative form, 'Whence am I?', try to concentrate on the right side of the chest (where they imagine something as a spiritual heart), expecting a reply such as 'I am from here' ! This is in no way better than the ancient method of meditating upon anyone of the six yogic centres *(shad-chakras)* in the body !! For, is not thinking of any place in the body only a second person attention (an objective attention)? Before we start to explain the technique of Self-enquiry, is it not of the utmost importance that all such misconceptions be removed ? Let us see, therefore, how they may be removed.

In Sanskrit, the terms *'atman'* and *'aham'* both mean 'I'. Hence, *'atma-vichara'* means an attention seeking 'Who is this I?' It may rather be called **'I-attention'**, **'Self-attention' or 'Self-abidance'**. The consciousness 'I' thus pointed out here is the first person feeling. But as we have already said, it is to be understood that the consciousness mixed with adjuncts as 'I am this' or 'I am that' is the ego *(ahankara)* or the individual soul *(jiva)*, whereas the **unalloyed consciousness** devoid of adjuncts and shining alone as 'I-I' (or 'I am that I am') is Self *(atman)*, the Absolute *(brahman)* or *God (iswara)*. Does it not amount to saying then that the first person consciousness, 'I', can be either the ego or Self? Since all people generally take the ego-feeling ('I am the body') to be 'I', the ego is also given the name 'self' *(atman)*

and is called' individual self' *(jivatma)* by some sastras even now. It is only for this reason that even the attention to the ego, 'What is it?' or 'Who is it?', is also named by the-sastras as 'Self-enquiry' *(atma-vichara)*. Is it not clear, however, that Self, the existence-consciousness, neither needs to do any enquiry nor can be subjected to any enquiry? It is just in order to rectify this defect that Bhagavan Ramana named it 'Who am 1?' rather than using the ancient term 'Self-enquiry' *(atma-vichara)!* The ego, the feeling of 'I', generally taken by people to be the first person consciousness, is not the real first person consciousness; Self alone is the real first person consciousness. The ego-feeling, which is merely a shadow of it, is a false first person consciousness. When one enquires into this ego, what it is or who it is, it disappears because it is really nonexistent, and the enquirer, having nothing more to do, is established in Self as Self.

Because it rises, springing up from Self, the false first person consciousness mentioned above has to have a place and a time of rising. Therefore, the question 'Whence am I?' means only 'Whence (from where) does the ego rise ?'. A place of rising can only be for the ego. But for Self, since it has no rising or setting, there can be no particular place or time.

> "When scrutinized, we – the ever-known existing Thing – alone are; then where is time and where is space? If we are (mistaken to be) the body, we shall be involved in time and *space;* but, are we the body? Since we are the One, now, then and

63 Time and space apparently exist in us (Self), but we are neither in them nor bound by them, The experience of the *Jnani* is only 'I am' and not 'I am everywhere and in all times',

> ever, that One in space, here there and everywhere[63], we – the timeless and spaceless Self – alone are !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu', verae* 15

- thus says Sri Bhagavan. Therefore, enquiring 'Whence am I?' is enquiring 'Whence is the ego?'. Only to the rising of the ego, which is conditioned by time and space, will the question 'Whence am I?' be applicable. The meaning which Sri Bhagavan expects us to understand from the term 'Whence ?' or 'From where?' is **'From what?'.** When taken in this sense, instead of a place or time coming forth as a reply, Self-existence, 'we', the Thing *(vastu),* alone is experienced as the reply. If, on the other hand, we anticipate a place as an answer to the question 'Whence?', a place, conditioned by time and space, will be experienced within the body 'two digits to the right from the centre of the chest' (as said in *'Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandham'* verse 18). Yet this experience is not the ultimate or absolute one *(paramarthikam).* For, Sri Bhagavan has positively asserted that Heart *(hridayam)* is verily Self-consciousness, which is timeless, spaceless, formless and nameless.

> "He who thinks that Self (or Heart) is within the insentient body, while in fact the body is within Self, is like one who thinks that the screen, which supports the cinema picture, is contained within the picture '"
>
> *'Ekatma Panchakam',* verse 3

Finding a place in the body as the rising-point of the ego in reply to the question 'Whence?' is not the objective of Sri Bhagavan's teachings; nor is it the fruit to be gained by Self-enquiry. Sri Bhagavan has declared clearly the objective of His teachings and the fruit to be gained by seeking the rising--place of the ego as follows:

> "When sought within 'What is the place from which it rises as I?', 'I' (the ego) will die ! This is Self-enquiry *(jnana-vichara)* ."
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 19

Therefore, the result which is aimed at when seeking the rising-place of the ego is the annihilation of that ego and not an experience of a place in the body. It is only in reply to the immature people who – not able to have even an intellectual understanding *(paroksha jnana)* about the nature of Self, which shines alone as the one, non-dual thing, unlimited by (indeed, absolutely unconnected with) time and space, unlimited even in the form 'Brahman is everywhere, Brahman is at all times, Brahman is everything' *(sarvatra brahma, sarvada brahma, sarvam brahma)* – always raise the question, "Where is the seat for Self in the body?", that the sastras and sometimes even Sri Bhagavan had to say: "... two digits to the right (from the centre of the chest)

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64 It is worth noting that the mention of the location of the heart 'two digits to the right from the centre of the chest' is not included in *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'* (the main *forty* verses), where the original and direct teachings of Sri Bhagavan are given, but *only* in *'Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandham'* (the supplementary forty verses), since this is merely and of the diluted truths which the sastras condescendingly reply in concession to the weakness of immature aspirants. Moreover, these two verses, 18 and 19, are not original compositions of Sri Bhagavan, but only translations from a Malayalam work named *'Ashtanga Hridayam'*, which is not even a spiritual text, but only a medical one. It should also be noted here that these two verses do not at all recommend, nor even mention, the practice of concentrating the attention on this point in the body, two digits to the right from the centre of the chest. Indeed, in no place – neither in His original works, nor in His translations of others' works, nor even in any of the conversations with Him recorded by devotees – has Sri Bhagavan ever recommended this practice (for meditation upon the right side of the chest or upon any other part of the transient, insentient and alien body is nothing but an attention to a second person, an object other than 'I'), and when asked about it, He in fact used to condemn it (see *'Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi'*, number 273).

is the heart"[64] Hence, this heart--place *(hridaya-stanam)* is not the ultimate or absolute Reality, The reader may here refer to *'Maharshi's, Gospel'*, Book II, chapter IV, 'The Heart is the Self' (8th edition, 1969, pages 68 to 72; 9th edition, 1979, pages 72 to 76).

Thus, attending to oneself in the form 'Whence am I?' is enquiring into the ego, the 'rising I', But, while enquiring 'Who am I ?', there are some aspirants who take the feeling 'I' to be their **'being'** (existence) and not their 'rising' ! If it is taken thus, that is attention to Self. It is just to understand clearly the difference between these two forms of enquiry that the difference between our 'rising' and our 'being' has been explained earlier in this chapter, Just as the correct meaning of the term 'meditation upon Brahman' *(brahma-dhyanam)* used by the sastras up till now is explained by Sri Bhagavan in the last two lines of the first benedictory verse of *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'* to be 'abiding in the Heart as it is' (that is to say, abiding as Self is the correct way of meditating upon it), so also, the correct meaning of the term 'Self-enquiry' *(atma-vichara)* is here rightly explained to be **'turning Selfwards'** (or attending to Self),

In either of these two kinds of enquiry ('Who am I'?' or 'Whence am I ?'), since the attention of the aspirant is focused only on himself, nothing other than Self *(atman)*, which is the true import of the word 'I', will be finally experienced. Therefore, the ultimate result of both the enquiries, 'Whence am I ?' and 'Who am I ?', is the same ! How? He who seeks 'Whence am I ?' is following the ego, the form of which is 'I am so-and-so', and while doing so, the adjunct 'so-and-so, having no real existence, dies on the way, and thus he remains established in Self, the surviving **'I am'**. On the other hand, he who seeks 'Who am I ? drowns effortlessly in his real natural 'being' (Self), which

ever shines as **'I am that I am'**, Therefore, whether done in the form 'Whence am I?' or 'Who am I ?', what is absolutely essential is that Self-attention should be pursued till the very end. Moreover, it is not necessary for sincere aspirants even to name before-hand the feeling 'I' either as ego or as Self, For, are there two persons in the aspirant, the ego and Self? This is said because, since everyone of us has the experience 'I am one only and not two'. we should not give room to an imaginary dual feeling – one 'I' seeking for another 'I' – by differentiating ego and Self as 'lower self' and higher-self'

> " ... Are there two selves, one to be an object known by the other? For, the true experience of all is 'I am one' !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 33

- asks Sri Bhagavan.

Thus it is sufficient if we cling to the feeling 'I' uninterruptedly till the very end. Such attention to the feeling 'I', the common daily experience of everyone, is what is meant by Self-attention, For those who accept as their basic knowledge the 'I am the body' – consciousness *(jiva bhava),* being unable to doubt its (the ego's) existence, it is suitable to take to Self-attention (that is, to do Self-enquiry) in the form 'Whence am I ?', On the other hand, for those who instead of assuming that they have an individuality *(jiva bhava)* such as 'I am so-and-so' or 'I am this', attend thus, 'What is this feeling which shines as I am?', it is suitable to be fixed in Self-attention in the form 'Who am I ?' What is important to be sure of during practice *(sadhana)* is that our attention is turned only towards 'I', the first person singular feeling.

CHAPTER

8

The Technique of Self-enquiry

At the young age of sixteen, when He was not even aware of the fact, 'This is the *sadhana* of Self-enquiry that directly bestows the experience of Brahman', it so happened one day that, without any prior intention, Bhagavan Sri Ramana embarked upon this rare *sadhana!* On that day, as if He were about to die, a great fear of death possessed Him all of a sudden. Because of it, an impulse to scrutinize death also arose in Him spontaneously. He was not perturbed to see the fast-approaching death, nor did He feel inclined to inform others about it ! He decided to welcome it calmly and to solve the problem all alone. He lay down, stretching His limbs like a corpse, and began to scrutinize death practically, face to face. Since it is of prime importance for the readers to know the technique of Self-enquiry performed by Sri Bhagavan, the *Sadguru,* let us see it here in the very words in which He later narrated His experience.

"All right, death has come ! What is 'death'? What is it that is dying? It is this body that is dying; let it die!' Deciding thus, closing the lips tightly, and remaining without breath or speech like a corpse, what came to my knowledge as I looked within was: 'This body is dead. Now it will be taken to the cremation ground and burnt; it will become ashes. All right, but with the destruction of this

body, am I also destroyed? Am I really this body? Although this body is lying as a speechless and breathless corpse, undoubtedly I am existing, untouched by this death! My existence is shining clearly and unobstructed! So this perishable body is not 'I'! I am verily the immortal 'I' (Self) !! Of all things, I alone am the reality ! This body is subject to death; but I who transcend the body am eternally living ! Even the death that came to the body was unable to touch me !' Thus it dawned directly, and along with it the fear of death that had come at first also vanished, never to appear again! All this was experienced in a split second as direct knowledge *(pratyaksham)* and not as mere reasoning thoughts. From that time onwards, the consciousness *(chit)* of my existence *(sat)* transcending the body has ever continued to remain the same" – thus Sri Ramana narrated.

Although Sri Bhagavan later explained all this to us in so many words, He emphasized the all-important fact: 'All this took place within a second as a direct experience, without the action of mind and speech'.

On account of this fear of death, the concentration of Sri Bhagavan was fixed and deeply immersed in Self-attention in order to find out 'What is my existence ? What is it that dies ?'. Thus it is proved by what Sri Bhagavan Himself did that, as we have been explaining all along, only such a firm fixing of our attention on Self is 'Self-enquiry' *(atma-vichara)*. He has confirmed the same idea in the work' *Who am I'?"*, where He says: "Always keeping the mind (the attention) fixed In Self (in the feeling 'I') alone is called Self-enquiry'... Remaining firmly in Self-abidance, without giving even the least room to the rising of any thought other than- the thought of Self (that is, without giving even the least attention to any second or third person, but only to Self),

is surrendering oneself to God (which alone is called *parabhakti*, the supreme devotion[65])". When Sri Bhagavan was asked, 'What is the means and technique to hold constantly on to the 'I' -consciousness?', He revealed in His works the technique of Self-enquiry which, as explained above, He had undertaken in His early age, but in a more detailed manner as follows:-

"Self *(atman)* is that which is self-shining in the form 'I am that I am'. One should not imagine it to be anything such as this or that (light or sound). Imagining' or thinking thus is itself bondage. Since Self is the consciousness which is neither light nor darkness, let it not be imagined as a light of any kind. That thought itself would be a bondage. The annihilation of the ego (the primal thought) alone is liberation *(mukti)*. All the three bodies consisting of the five sheaths are contained in the feeling 'I am the body'; therefore if, by the enquiry 'Who is this I ?' (that is, by Self-attention), the identification with (attachment to) the gross body alone is removed, the identification with the other two bodies will automatically cease to exist. As it is only by clinging to this that the identifications with the subtle and casual bodies live, there is no need to annihilate these identifications separately.

"How to enquire? Can the body, which is insentient like a log and such things, shine and function as 'I'? It cannot.

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65 The enquiry 'Who am I ?' (the path of knowledge or *jnana marga)* and self-surrender (the path of love or *bhakti marga)* are the two great royal paths found out by Bhagavan Sri Ramana from His own experience and taught by Him for the salvation of humanity. in this book, *'The Path of Sri Ramana – Part One'*, the path of pure, non-dual knowledge, the enquiry 'Who am I?', alone is dealt with, while in chapter two of *'The Path of Sri Ramana – Part Two'*, a full exposition of the nature of this supreme devotion *(parabhakti)* is given.

"The body cannot say 'I' ..."

'Ulladhu Narpadhu', verse 23

Therefore, discarding the corpse-like body as an actual corpse and remaining without even uttering the word 'I' vocally —

> "Discarding the body as a corpse, not uttering the word 'I' by mouth, but seeking with the mind diving inwards 'Whence does this I rise ?' alone is the path of knowledge *(jnana marga)* ..."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 29

–, if keenly observed what that feeling is which now shines' as 'I', a **sphurana**[66] alone will be experienced without sound as 'I-I' in the heart.

> "When the mind reaches the Heart by enquiring within 'Who am I ?', he, 'I' (the ego), falling down abashed, the One (the Reality) appears spontaneously as 'I-I' (I am that I am) ..."
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 30

> "When sought within 'What is the place from which it rises as I ?', 'I' (the ego) will die. This is Self-enquiry."
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 19

> "Where this 'I' dies, there and then shines forth spontaneously the One as 'I-I' That alone is the Whole (puranam)"
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 20

"If without leaving it we just be, the *sphurana*, completely annihilating the feeling of individuality – the

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66 *Sphurana:* an experience of a new, clear and fresh knowledge of one's existence.

ego, 'I am the body', finally will come to an end just as the camphor flame dies out. This alone is proclaimed to be liberation by Sages and scriptures.

"Although in the beginning, on account of the tendencies towards sense-objects *(vishaya-vasanas)* which have been recurring down the ages, thoughts rise in countless numbers like the waves of the ocean, they will all perish as the aforesaid Self-attention becomes more and more intense. Since even the doubt "Is it possible to destroy all of them and to remain as Self alone ?' is only a thought, without giving room even to that thought, one should persistently cling fast to Self-attention. However great a sinner one may be, if, not lamenting 'Oh, I am a sinner! How can I attain salvation?' but completely giving up even the thought that one is a sinner, **one is steadfast in Self-attention, one will surely be saved.** Therefore everyone, diving deep within himself with desirelessness (*vairagya),* can attain the pearl of Self.

"As long as there are tendencies towards sense-objects in the mind, (since they will always create some subtle or gross world-appearance) so long the enquiry 'Who am I?' is necessary. As and when thoughts rise of their own accord, one should annihilate all of them through enquiry then and there **in their very place of origin.** What is the means to annihilate them? If other thoughts rise disturbing Self-attention, one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire 'To whom did they rise?, It will "then be known 'To me'; immediately, if we observe 'Who is this I that thinks?', the mind (our power of attention which was hitherto engaged in thinking of second and third persons) will turn back to its source (Self). Hence (since no one is there to attend to them), the other thoughts which had risen

will also subside. **By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the mind to, abide in its source increases.** When the mind thus abides in the Heart, the first thought, 'I' ('I am the body', the rising 'I'), which is the root of all other thoughts, itself having vanished, the ever-existing **Self** (the being 'I') alone will shine. The place (or state) where even the slightest trace of the thought 'I' ('I am this, that, the body, Brahman and so on') does not exist, alone is Self. That alone is called **Silence** *(maunam)*.

"After coming to know that the final decision of all the scriptures *(sastras)* is that such destruction of the mind alone is liberation *(mukti)*, to read scriptures unlimitedly is fruitless. In order to destroy the mind, it is necessary to enquire who one is; then how, instead of enquiring thus within oneself, to enquire and know who one, is in scriptures ? For Rama to know himself to be Rama, is a mirror necessary ? (That is to say, for one to know oneself through Self-attention to be 'I am', are scriptures necessary ?) 'Oneself' is within the five sheaths, whereas the scriptures are outside them. Therefore, how can oneself, who is to be attended to within, setting aside even the five sheaths, be found in scriptures? Since scripture-enquiry is futile, one should give it up and take to Self-enquiry" – thus says Bhagavan Sri Ramana.[67]

By means of an example, let us make more clear this technique *(sadhana)* of fixing the attention only on Self, which has been described above in the words of Sri Bhagavan. But from the very outset it must be conceded that, since the nature of Self is unique and beyond

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67 Refer to the first chapter of '*Vichara Sangraha*' and to the whole of '*Who am I?*', from which the above six paragraphs (beginning at the bottom of page 142) are paraphrased.

comparison, it cannot be explained fully and accurately by anyone through any example whatsoever. Though most of the examples which have been given in accordance with the intellectual development of the people and the different circumstances of their times may be appropriate to a great extent, these insentient *(jada)* examples can never fully explain Self, the sentient *(chit)*. The example of a cinema projector often pointed out by Sri Bhagavan and the fallowing example of a reflected ray of the sun from a mirror are given solely with the view that they may remove many doubts of the readers and clarify their understanding. But one should not fall into the error of stretching the example too far, as did the blind man[68] who concluded, 'My child swallowed a crane', when he was told, 'Milk is white'.

A broken piece of mirror is lying on the ground in the open space, in full sunshine. The sunlight that falls on that piece of mirror is, reflected, and the reflected light enters a nearby dark room and falls on its inner wall. The ray from the mirror to the inside wall of the dark room is a reflected ray of the sun. By means of this reflected ray, a man in the dark room is able to see the objects inside that room. The

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68 The story of the blind man: Once a man, blind from birth, was informed that a son was born to him. While he was still rejoicing over the happy event, the very next day brought him the shocking news of his child's death. With grief he asked

"How did my baby die?"
"By drinking milk,"
"How is milk ?"
"Milk is white"
"How is white ?"
"White is like the crane."
"How is the crane ?"

Losing his patience, the messenger made the blind man feel his hand, which his hand like a crane, and said, "The crane is like this." At once the blind man lamented, exclaiming, "Ah ! No wonder my small child should die on taking such a big thing !"

reflected light, when seen on the wall, is of the same form or shape as the piece of mirror (triangular, square or round). But the direct sunlight (the original light, the source of the reflected ray) in the open space shines indivisible, single, all-pervading and unlimited by any specific form or shape. Self, our existence-consciousness, is similar to the direct sunlight in the open space. The ego-feeling or mind-knowledge, the 'I am the body' – consciousness, is similar to the reflected ray stretching from the mirror to the inner wall of the room. Since Self-consciousness is limitless like the vast, all-pervading direct sunlight, it has no form-adjunct *(rupa-upadhi)*. Since, just as the reflected ray takes on the limitations and size of the piece of mirror, the ego-feeling experiences the size and form of a body as 'I', it has adjuncts. Just as the objects in the dark room are cognized by means of the reflected light, the body and world are cognized only by means of the mind knowledge.

> "Although the world and the mind rise and set together, it is by the mind alone that the world shines...".
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 7

Let us suppose that a man in the dark room wants to stop observing the objects in the room, which are seen by means of the reflected light, and is possessed instead by a longing to see its source, 'Whence comes this light ?'. If so, he should go to the very spot where the reflected beam strikes the wall, position his eyes and look back along the beam. What does he see then ? The sun ! But what he now sees is not the real sun; it is only a reflection of it, Furthermore, it will appear to him **as if the sun is lying at a certain spot on the ground** outside the room! The particular spot where the sun is seen lying outside can even be pointed out as being so many feet to the right or left of

the room (like saying, "Two digits 'to the right from the centre of the chest is the heart"). But, does the sun really lie thus on the ground at that spot ? No, that is only the place whence the reflected beam rises ! What should he do if he wants to see the real sun ! He must keep his eyes positioned along the straight line in which the reflected beam comes and, without moving them to either side of it. follow it towards the reflected sun which is then visible to him.

Just as the man in the dark room, deciding to see the source of the reflected beam which has come into the room, gives up the desire either to enjoy or to make research about the things there with the help of that reflected beam, so a man who wants to know the real Light (Self) must give up all efforts towards enjoying or knowing about the various worlds which shine only by means of the mind-light functioning through the five senses, since he cannot know Self either if he is deluded by cognizing and desiring external objects (like a worldly man) or if he is engaged in investigating them (like our modern scientists). This giving up of attention towards external sense-objects is desirelessness *(vairagya)* or inward renunciation. The eagerness to see whence the reflected ray comes into the room corresponds to the eagerness to see whence the ego. 'I', the mind-light, rises. This eagerness is love for Self *(swatma-bhakti)*. Keeping the eyes positioned along the straight line of the beam without straying away to one side or the other corresponds to the one-pointed attention fixed unswervingly on the 'I' – consciousness. Is not the man now moving along the straight line of the reflected beam from the dark room towards the piece of mirror lying outside? This moving corresponds to diving within towards the Heart.

"Just as one would dive in order to find something that had fallen into the water, so one should dive within with a keen (introverted) mind, controlling breath and speech, and know the rising-place of the rising ego. Know thus !"

'Ulladhu Narpadhu', verse 28

Some, taking only the words 'should dive within controlling breath and speech', set out to practise exercises of breath control *(pranayama)*. Although it is a fact that the breath stops in the course of enquiry, for it to be stopped the roundabout way of *pranayama* is not necessary. **When the mind, with a tremendous longing** to find the source which gives it light, **turns inwards, the breath stops automatically**[69]! If the breath of the enquirer is exhaled at the time of his mind thus giving up knowing external sense-objects *(vishayas)* and starting to attend to its original form of light, Self, it automatically remains outside without being again drawn in. Likewise, if it is inhaled at that time, it automatically remains inside without being again exhaled ! These are to be taken as 'external retention' *(bahya kumbhaka)* and 'internal retention' *(antara kumbhaka)* respectively. Until there is a rising of a thought on account of non-vigilance *(pramada)* in Self-attention, this retention *(kumbhaka)* will continue in an enquirer quite effortlessly. By a little scrutiny, will it not be clear to anyone that even in our everyday life when some startling news is suddenly brought to us or when we try to recollect a forgotten thing

69 "Therefore, by the practice of fixing the mind (the attention) in the Heart (Self), the pure consciousness, both the destruction of tendencies *(vasanas)* and the control of the breath are accomplished automatically."

'Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandham' verse 24

with full concentration, the breath stops automatically on account of the keenness of mind (the intensity of concentration) that takes place then? Similarly, the breath will stop automatically as soon as the mind, with an intense longing to see its original form of light and with earnest one-pointedness, begins to turn keenly and remain within. In this state of retention *(kumbhaka)*, no matter how long it continues, the enquirer does not experience suffocation, that is, the urge to exhale or inhale. But while practicing *pranayama*, if the units of time *(matras)* of the retention are increased, one does experience suffocation. If the enquirer's attention is so intensely fixed on Self that he does not even care to know whether the breath has stopped or not, then his state of retention is involuntary and without struggle. There are some aspirants, however, who try to know at that time whether or not the 'breath has stopped. This is wrong, for since the attention is thus focusing on the breath, Self-attention will be lost and thereby various thoughts will shoot up and the flow of *sadhana* will be interrupted, That is why Sri Bhagavan advised, 'Control breath and speech with a keen (introverted) mind'. It would be wise to understand this verse thus, by adding 'with a keen mind' *(kurnda matiyal)* in all the three places, 'Control the breath with a keen mind dive within with a keen mind, and know the rising-place with a keen mind',

By his very moving along it, does not the man who positions his eyes on the reflected beam reduce its length? Just as the length of the beam decreases as he advances, so also the mind's tendency of expanding shrinks more and more as the aspirant perseveres in sincerely seeking its source.

> "... When the attention goes deeper and deeper within along the (reflected) ray 'I', its length

decrease more and more, and when the ray 'I' dies, that which shines as 'I' is *Jnana*, "

'Atma Vichara Patikam', verse 9

When the man finally reaches very near to the piece of mirror, he can be said to have reached the very source of the reflected ray. This is similar to the aspirant diving within and reaching the source (Heart) whence he had risen. Does not the man now attain a state where the length of the reflected ray is reduced to nothing – a state where no reflection is possible because he is so close to the mirror? Similarly, when the aspirant, on account of his diving deeper and deeper within by an intense effort of Self-attention, is so close to his source that not even an iota of rising of the ego is possible, he remains **absorbed in the great dissolution** of the 'I am the body' – feeling *(dehatma-buddhi)*, which he had hitherto had as a target of attention, This dissolution is what Sri Bhagavan refers to when He says, 'I' will die", in *'Upadesa Undhiyar'* verse 19.

Because of his mere search for the source of the reflected ray of the sun, does not the man now, after leaving the dark room, stand in the open space in a state of void created by the non-existence of that reflected ray? This is the state of the aspirant remaining in the Heart-space *(hridayakasa)* in the state of great void *(maha sunya)* created, through mere Self-attention, by the non-existence of the ego-'I'. The man who has come out of the room into the open space is dazed and laments, "Alas ! The sun that guided me so far (the reflected sun) is now lost", At this moment, a friend of his standing in the open space comes to him with these words of solace, "Where were you all this time? Were you not in the dark room! Where are you now? Are you not in the open space! When you were in the dark

room, that which guided you out was just one thin ray of light; but here (in this vast open space) are not the rays of light countless and in an unlimited mass? What you saw previously was not even the direct sunlight, but only a reflected ray! But what you are now experiencing is the direct *(saksha)* sunlight. When the place where you are now is nothing but the unlimited space of light, can a darkness come into existence because of the void created by the disappearance of the reflected ray? Can its disappearance be a loss? **Know that its disappearance itself is the true light; it is not darkness".**

Similarly, by the experience of the great void *(maha sunya)* created by the annihilation of the ego, the aspirant is some-what taken aback, 'Alas ! Even the 'I' consciousness (the ego) which I was attending to in *my sadhana* till now as a beacon-light is lost ! Then is there really no such thing at all as 'Self' *(atman)?*". At that very moment, the *Sadguru,* who is ever shining as his Heart, points out to him thus, "Can the destruction of the ego, which is only an infinitesimal reflected consciousness, be really a loss? Are you not clearly aware not only of its former existence, but also of the present great void created by its disappearance? Therefore, **know that you,** who know even the void as 'this is a void', **alone are the true knowledge; you are not a void**[70] **!"**, in an instant as a direct experience of the shining of his own **existence-consciousness** by touching (flashing as *sphurana)* in Heart as Heart! The aspirant who started the search 'Whence am I?' or 'Who am I ?' now attains the non-dual Self-knowledge, the true knowledge **'I am that I am'**, which is devoid of the limitations of a particular place or time.

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70 "...Know that I (Self) is the true knowledge; It is not a void!"

'Ulladhu Narpadhu', verse 12

Clinging to the consciousness 'I' and thereby acquiring a greater and greater intensity of concentration upon it, is **diving deep within.** Instead of thus diving within, many, thinking that they are engaged in Self-enquiry, sit down for hours together simply repeating mentally or vocally, "Who am I ?" or "Whence am I?". There are others again who, when they sit for enquiry, face their thoughts and endlessly repeat mentally the following questions taught by Sri Bhagavan. "To whom come these thoughts? To me; who am I?", or sometimes they even wait for the next thought to come up so that they can fling these questions at it! Even this is futile Did we sit to hold thus a court of enquiry, calling one thought after another! Is this the *sadhana* of diving within! Therefore, we should not remain watching 'What is the next thought?'. Merely to keep on questioning in this manner is not Self-attention. Concerning those who thus merely float on the surface of the thought-waves; keeping their mind on these questions instead of diving within by attending to the existence-consciousness with a keen mind, thereby controlling mind, breath and all the activities of the body and senses, Sri Bhagavan says:

> "Compare him who asks himself 'Who am I?' and 'From which place am I?', though he himself exists all the while as Self, to a drunken man who prattles 'Who am I?' and 'Where am I?'."
>
> *'Ekatma Panchakam'*, verse 2

and further, He asks:

> "...How to attain that state wherein 'I' does not rise the state of egolessness (the great void or *maha sunya)* – unless (instead of floating like this) we seek the place whence 'I' rises? And unless we

attain that (egolessness), say, how to abide in the state of Self, where 'We are That' *(soham)?*"

'Ulladhu Narpadhu', versa 27

Therefore, **all that we are to practise is to be still** *(summa iruppadu)* **with the remembrance of the feeling 'I'.** It is only when there is a slackness of vigilance during Self-attention that thoughts, which are an indication of it, will rise. In other words, if thoughts rise it means that our Self-attention is lost. It is only as a contrivance to win back Self-attention from thought – attention that Sri Bhagavan advised us to ask, 'To whom do these thoughts appear?' Since the answer 'To me' is only a dative form of 'I', it will easily remind us of the nominative form, the feeling 'I'. However, if we question, 'Who thinks these thoughts?', since the nominative form, the feeling 'I', is obtained as an answer, will not Self-attention, which has been lost unnoticed, be regained directly? This regaining of Self-attention is actually **being Self** (that is, remaining or abiding as Self)! Such 'being' alone is the correct *sadhana*[71]; **sadhana is not doing, but being!!**

Some complain, "When the very rising of the ego from sleep is so surreptitious as to elude our notice, how can we see whence it rises? It seems to be impossible!" That is true, because the mind's effort of attention is absent in sleep, since the mind itself is not at all there! As ordinary people are not acquainted with the knowledge of their 'being' but only with the knowledge of their 'doing' (that is, the knowledge of their making efforts), for such people it is

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71 "What our Lord Ramana firmly advises us to take to, as the greatest and most powerful *tapas* is only this much, 'Be still' *(summa iru)*, and not anything *(dhyana, yoga* and so on) as the duty to be performed by the mind."

'Guru Vachaka Kovai' verse 773

impossible to know from sleep the rising of the ego from there. Since the effort considered by them as necessary is absent in sleep, it is no wonder that they are unable to commence the enquiry from sleep itself! But, since the whole of the waking state is a mere sportive play of the ego and since the effort of the mind here is under the experience of everyone, at least in the waking state one can turn and attend to the pseudo 'I' shining in the form 'I am so-and-so'.

> " 'Turning inwards, daily see thyself with an Introverted look and it (the Reality) will be known' – thus didst Thou tell me, O *my* Arunachala!"
>
> *'Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai'*, verse 44

The enquiry begins only during the leisure hours of the waking state when one sits for practice. Just as a thing comes to our memory when its name, is thought of, does not the first person feeling come to everyone's memory as soon as the name (pronoun) 'I' is thought of? Although this first person feeling is only the ego, the pseudo 'I'-consciousness, it does not matter. **Having our attention withdrawn from second and third persons and clinging to the first person – that alone is sadhana.** As soon as the attention turns towards the first person feeling, not only do other thoughts disappear, but also the first thought, the rising and expanding **pseudo 'I'-consciousness**, itself begins contracting !

> "When the mind, the ego, which wanders outside knowing only other objects (second and third persons), begins to attend to its own nature, all other objects will' disappear and, by experiencing its true nature (Self), the pseudo 'I' will also die."
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'*, verse 193

> "...If the fickle mind turns towards the first person, the first person (the ego) will become non-existent and That which really exists will then shine forth..."
>
> *'Atma Vichara Patikam'*, verse 6

> "...Attending to the first person is equal to committing suicide..."
>
> *'Atma Vichara Patikam'*, verse 7

This is the great revelation made by Bhagavan Sri Ramana and bestowed by Him as a priceless boon upon the world of spiritual aspirants in order to bring Vedanta easily under practical experience.

Just as a rubber ball[72] gains greater and greater momentum while bouncing down the staircase, the more the concentration in clinging to the first person consciousness is intensified the faster is the contraction of the first thought (the ego), till finally it merges in its source. That which now merges thus is only the adjunct *(upadhi)*, the feeling 'so-and-so' which, at the moment of waking, came and mixed with the pure existence-consciousness, which was shining in sleep as 'I am', to constitute the form of the ego, 'I am so-and-so', 'I am this' or 'I am that'. That is, what has come and mixed now slips away. All that an aspirant can experience in the beginning of his practice is only the slipping away (subsidence) of the ego. Since the

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72 The simile of the rubber ball: Let us suppose that a rubber ball is bouncing down from the top of a staircase, the steps of which are one foot high, After falling on to the second step, if it bounces to a height of half a foot, will it not now fall on to the third step from a height of one-and-a-half feet? It will then bounce to a height of three-quarters of a foot. Hence, the height from which it falls on to the next step will be one-and-three-quarter feet. Does it not thus gain greater and greater momentum? Likewise, the shrinking of the first thought, 'I', gains greater and greater momentum till finally it merges in its source.

aspirant tracks down the ego from the waking state, where it is in full play, in the beginning it is possible for him to cognize only its removal. But to cognize its rising (how it rises and holds on to 'I am') from sleep will be more difficult for him at this stage.

When Self-attention is started from the waking consciousness 'I am so-and-so', since it is only the adjunct, the feeling 'so-and-so', that slips away (because it is merely non-existent, an unreal thing [the unreal dies and the Reality alone survives, *'satyameva jayate')*, the aspirant even now (when 'so-and-so' has dropped off) feels no loss to the consciousness 'I am' which he had experienced in the waking state. Now he attains a state which is similar to the sleep he has experienced every day and which is devoid of all and everything (because, 'The ego is verily all – *sarvam'*[73], since the whole universe, which is nothing but thoughts, is an expansion of the ego). But a great difference is now experienced by him between the sleep that, without his knowledge, has been coming and overwhelming him all these days due to the complete exhaustion of mind and body, and this sleep which is now voluntarily brought on and experienced by him with the full consciousness of the waking state. How?

> "Because there is consciousness, this is not sleep, and because there is the absence of thoughts, it is not the waking state it is therefore the existence-consciousness *(sat-chit)*, the unbroken nature of Siva *(akhanda siva-swarupam)*. Without leaving it, abide in it with great love."
>
> *'Sadhanai Saram'* [74]

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73 Refer to *'Ulladlhu Narpadhu'*, verse 26

74 *'Sadhanai Saram'* is a book in Tamil containing the answers given in verse form by the author of this book to clear the doubts of questioners. Now published in English as " A light on the Teaching of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi" by Aham Trust.

Whenever the aspirant during the time of *sadhana* becomes extroverted from this voluntarily brought-about sleep-like state, he feels absolutely certain, 'I was not sleeping, but was all the while fully conscious of myself'. But, though his real aspect (existence-consciousness) is ever knowing without he least doubt its own existence in sleep as 'I am', whenever he becomes extroverted from everyday sleep, since he (the mind) did not even once have the experience of continuing to know 'I am' from the waking state, he can only say, 'I slept, I did not know myself at that time', The truth is this: since the state of his Self-existence, devoid of the adjunct 'so-and-so', is traced out and caught hold of in the voluntarily brought-about sleep with the full consciousness *(prajna)* continuing from the waking state, the knowledge that the pure existence-consciousness *(sat-chit)* knows itself as 'I am' is clear in this sleep state. That is why the aspirant now says, 'I did exist throughout, I did not sleep' ! But prior to his *sadhana*, since he was throughout the waking state identifying **as 'I' the mind**, which is the form of the adjunct 'so-and-so', **after waking up** from the ordinary daily sleep, where the mind did not exist, this mind (the man) says, **'I did not exist in sleep'!** That is all !!

Those who experience many times this removal of the ego through practice, since they have an acquaintance with the experience of their pure existence-consciousness as 'I am' even after the removal of the ego, can minutely cognize, even at the moment of just waking up from sleep, how the adjunct 'so-and-so' comes and mixes. Those who do not have such strength of practice cannot cognize, from sleep itself, the ego at its place of rising. The only thing that is easy for them is to find the ego's place of setting (which is also its place of rising) through the effort started from the waking state. In either case, the end and the achievement

will be the same. When the attention is focused deeper and deeper within towards the feeling 'I am' and when the ego thereby shrinks more and more into nothingness, our power of attention becomes subtler than the subtlest atom and thereby grows sharper and brighter. Hence, the **strength of abidance** *(nishtha-bala)* will now be achieved to remain balanced between two states, that is, in a state after the end of sleep and before waking up, in other words, before being possessed by the first thought. Through this strength, the skill will now be gained by the aspirant to find out the adjunct 'so and so', which comes and mixes, to be a mere second person (that is, although it has hitherto been appearing as if it were the first person, it will now be clearly seen to be his mere shadow, non-Self, the primal sheath, a thing alien to him). This is what Janaka, the royal Sage, meant when he said, "I have found out the thief (the time of his coming – the time and place. of the ego's rising) who has been ruining me all along; I will inflict the right punishment upon him". Since the ego, which was acting till now as if it were the first person, is found to be a second person alien to us, the right punishment is to destroy it at its very place of rising (just as the reflected ray is destroyed at its place of rising) by clinging steadfastly to the real first person (the real import of the word 'I'), existence-consciousness, through the method of regaining Self-attention taught by Bhagavan Sri Ramana ('To whom? To me; who am I?'),

> "As you practise more and more abiding in this existence-consciousness (that is, remaining in the state between sleep and waking), the ordinary sleep which had previously been taking possession of you will melt away, and the waking which was full of sense-knowledges *(vishayas)* will not creep

> in again, Therefore repeatedly and untiringly abide in it,"
>
> *'Sadhanai Saram'*

By greater and more steadfast practice of abiding in this existence-consciousness, we will experience that this state seems to come often and take possession of us of its own accord whenever we are free from our daily work. But, since **this state of existence-consciousness is in fact nothing but 'we'**, it is wrong to think that such a state comes and takes possession of us! While at work, we attend to other things; after that work is over and before we attend to some other second or third person, we naturally **abide in our real state,** existence-consciousness. Though this happens to one and all every day, it is only to those who have the experience of Self-consciousness through the aforesaid practice that the state of Self-abidance will be clearly discerned after leaving one second parson thought and before catching another one (that is, between two thoughts).

> "Why has it been said (in the above two verses of *'Sadhana Saram')* that one ought to make effort repeatedly to be in that state (our existence-consciousness) and ought to abide in it with more and more love? Because, until all the tendencies *(vasanas)* which drive one out of it are completely exhausted, this state will seem to come and go[75]. Hence the need for continued effort and love to abide in Self."

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75 Just as the moving of clouds creates the illusion that the moon itself is moving in the opposite direction, the coming end going of the *vasanas* causes the illusion that our natural state of existence-consciousness is often coming and taking possession of us of its own accord, and then going away leaving us.

> "When, through this practice, our state of existence consciousness is experienced always as inescapably natural, then there will be no harm even if waking, dream and sleep pass across,"
>
> "For those who are well established in the unending Self-consciousness, which pervades and transcends all these three so-called states (waking, dream and sleep), there is but one state, the Whole, the All, and that alone is real! This state, which is devoid even of the feeling 'I am making effort', is your natural state of being! Be!!"
>
> *'Sadhanai Saram'*

Just as the man came out into the open space from the dark room by steadfastly holding on to and moving along the reflected ray, so the enquirer reaches the open space of Heart, coming out of the prison – the attachment to the body through the nerves *(nadis)* -, by assiduously holding on to the feeling 'I am'. Let us now see how this process takes place in the body of an advanced enquirer.

Just on waking up from sleep, a consciousness 'I' shoots up like a flash of lightening from the Heart to the brain. From the brain, it then spreads throughout the body along the nerves *(nadis)*. This 'I' consciousness is like electrical energy. Its impetus or voltage is the force of attachment *(abhimana-vega)* with which it identifies a body as 'I'. This consciousness, which spreads with such a tremendous impetus and speed all over the body as 'I', remains pure, having no adjunct *(upadhi)* attached to it, till it reaches the brain from the Heart. But, since its force of attachment *(abhimana-vega)* is so great that the time taken by it to shoot up from the Heart to the brain is extremely short, one millionth of a second so to speak, ordinary people are unable to cognize it in its pure condition, devoid

of any adjunct. This pure condition of the rising 'I' - consciousness is what was pointed out by Sri Bhagavan when He said, "In the space between two states or two thoughts, the pure ego (the pure condition or true nature of the ego) is experienced", in *'Maharshi's Gospel'*, Book One, chapter five, entitled 'Self and Ego'.

For this 'I' – consciousness that spreads from the brain at a tremendous speed throughout the body, the nerves *(nadis)* are the transmission lines, like wires for electrical power, (How many they are is immaterial here.) The mixing of the pure consciousness 'I am', after reaching the brain, with an adjunct as 'I am this, I am so-and-so, I am the body' is what is called bondage *(bandham)* or the knot *(granthi)*. This knot has two forms: **the knot of bondage to the nerves** *(nadi-bandha-granthi)* and **the knot of attachment** *(abhimana--granthi)*. The connection of this power, the 'I'-consciousness, with the gross nervous system is called 'the knot of bondage to the nerves' *(nadi bandha granthi)*, and its connection (its *dehabhimana)* with the causal body, whose form is the latent tendencies, is called 'the knot of attachment' *(abhimana-granthi)*, The knot of bondage to the nerves pertains to the breath (prana), while the knot of attachment pertains to the mind.

> "Mind and breath *(prana)* which have thought and action as their respective functions, are like two diverging branches of the trunk of a tree, but their root (the activating power) is one."
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 12

Since the source of the mind and the *prana* is one (the Heart), when the knot of attachment *(abhimana-granthi)* is severed by the annihilation of the mind through Self-enquiry, the knot of bondage to the nerves *(nadi-*

bandha-granthi) is also severed. In *raja yoga*, after removing the knot of bondage to the nerves by means of breath-control, if the mind which is thus controlled is made to enter the Heart from the brain *(sahasrara)*, since it reaches its source, then the knot of attachment is also severed.

> "When the mind which has been subdued by breath control is led (to the Heart) through the only path (the path of knowing Self)[76], its form will die."
>
> *'Upadesa Undhiyar'*, verse 14

However, since the knot of attachment is the basic one, until and unless the destruction of attachment *(abhimana)* is effected, by knowing self, even when the knot of bondage to the nerves is temporarily removed in sleep, swoon, death or by the use of anesthetics, the knot of attachment remains unaffected in the form of tendencies *(vasanas)*, which constitute the causal body, and, hence rebirths are inescapable. This is why Sri Bhagavan insists that one reaching *kashta-nirvikalpa-samadhi*[77] through *raja yoga* should not stop there (since it is only *mano-laya*, a temporary absorption of the mind), but that the mind so absorbed should be led to the Heart in order to attain *sahaja-nirvikalpa-samildhi*, which is the destruction of the mind *(mano-nasa)*, the destruction of the attachment to the

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76 In the Tamil original of this verse, the words used by Sri Bhagavan are *'or vazhi'*, which mean both 'the only path' and 'the path of knowing'. That the 'only path' mentioned here is Self-enquiry and not anyone of the paths of meditation is made clear in *'Guru Vachaka Kovai* verse 392, where Sri Bhagavan emphatically says: "When mental quiescence *(mano-laya)* is gained by restraining the breath...one should keenly enquire and know that existence-consciousness *(sat-chit)* which is not the body."

77 *Kashta-nirvikalpa-samadhi:* a state like, sleep in which the body remain inert like a log.

body *(dehabhimana-nasa)*. In the body of such a Self-realized One *(sahaja jnani)*, the coursing of the 'I' - consciousness along the nerves, even after the destruction of the knot of attachment, is like the water on a lotus leaf or like a burnt rope, and thus it cannot cause bondage. Therefore the destruction of the knot of attachment is anyway indispensible for the attainment of the natural state (*Sahaja Sthiti)*, the state of the destruction of the tendencies *(vasanakshaya)*.

The nerves *(nadis)* are gross, but the consciousness power *(chaitanya-sakti)* that courses through them is subtle. The connection of the 'I'-consciousness with the nerves is similar to that of the electrical power with the wires, that is, it is so unstable that it can be disconnected or connected in a second. Is it not an experience common to one and all that this connection is daily broken in sleep and effected in the waking state? When this connection is effected, body-consciousness rises, and when it is broken, body-consciousness is lost. Here it is to be remembered what has already been stated, namely that body-consciousness and world-consciousness are one and the same. So, like our clothes and ornaments which are daily removed and put on, this knot is alien to us, a transitory and false entity hanging loosely on us! This is what Sri Bhagavan referred to when He said, "We can detach ourself from what we are not"! Disconnecting the knot in such a way that it will never again come into being is called by many names such as 'the cutting of the knot' *(granthi-bheda)*. 'the destruction of the mind' *(mano-nasa)* and so on. 'In such a way that it will never again come into being' means this: by attending to it (the ego) through the enquiry 'Does it in truth exist at present?' in order to find out whether it had ever really come into being, there takes place the dawn of knowledge

(jnana), the real waking, **where it is clearly and firmly** known that no such knot has ever come into being, that no such ego has ever risen, that 'that which exists' alone ever exists, and that which was existing as 'I am' is ever existing as 'I am'! The attainment of this knowledge (Self-knowledge or *atma-jnana*), the knowledge that the knot or bondage is at all times non-existent and has never risen, is the permanent disconnecting of the knot. Let us explain this with a small story.

"Alas! I am imprisoned! I have been caught within this triangular room! How to free myself?" – thus was a man complaining and sobbing, standing in a corner where the ends of two walls joined. Groping on the two walls in front of him with his two hands, he was lamenting, "No doorway is available, nor even any kind of outlet for me to escape through ! How can I get out?"

Another man, a friend of his who was standing at a distance in the open, heard the lamenting, turned in that direction and noticed the state of his friend. There were only two walls in that open space. They were closing only two sides, one end of each of them meeting the other. The friend in the open quickly realized that the man, who was standing facing only the two walls in front of him, had concluded, due to the wrong notion that there was a third wall behind him, that he was imprisoned within a three-walled room. So he asked, "Why are you lamenting, groping on the walls?" "I am searching for a way through which to escape from the prison of this triangular room, but I don't find any way out !" replied the man.

The friend: "Well, why don't you search for a way out on the third wall behind you !"

The man (turning behind and looking): "Ah, here there is no obstacle ! Let me run away through this way." (So saying, he started to run away.)

The friend: "What ! Why do you run away? Is it necessary for you to do so? If you do not run away, will you remain in prison ?"

The man: "Oho! yes, yes ! I was not at all imprisoned ! How could I have been imprisoned when there was no wall at all behind me" It was merely my own delusion that I was imprisoned, was never imprisoned, nor am I' now released ! So I do not even need to run away from near these walls where I am now ! The defect of my not looking behind was the reason for my so-called bondage; and the turning of my attention behind is really the *sadhana* for my so-called liberation! In reality, I am ever remaining as I am, without any imprisonment or release !"

Thus knowing the truth, he remained quiet.

The two walls in the story signify the second and third persons. The first person is the third wall said to be behind the man. There is no way at all to liberation by means of second and third person attention. Only by the first person attention 'Who am I?' will the right knowledge be gained that the ego, the first person, is ever non-existent, and only when the first person is thus annihilated will the truth be realized that bondage and liberation are false.

> "So long as one thinks like a madman 'I am a bound one', thoughts of bondage and liberation will last. But when looking into oneself 'Who is this bound one? the eternally free and ever-shining Self alone will (be found to) exist. Thus,

where the thought of bondage no longer stands,
can the thought of liberation still endure !"

'Ulladhu Narpadhu', verse 39

Just as we have explained the three walls as representing the three places[78], the first, second and third persons, we can also explain them as representing the three times, the present, past and future. Even through the attention to the present – avoiding all thoughts of past and future – in order to know what is the truth of the present, all thoughts will subside and the 'present' itself will vanish. How? That which happened one moment before now is considered by us to be past, and that which will happen one moment from now is considered to be future. Therefore

78 In the grammar of most language, including Sanskrit, the first person, 'I', the second person, 'you', and the third person, 'he, she, it end so on', are each denominated as a person *(purusha)*. But in Tamil grammar these three are termed respectively as the first place, second place and third place. Classifying them thus as places is a very helpful clue for aspirants. How? is not the sole aim of sincere aspirants on the path to Reality to transcend *maya* and to reach Brahman, the Supreme Thing? How then to cross or transcend *maya* ?

Time and place are the two foremost conceptions projected by *maya*. Not even a single thought can be formed which is not bound up with *maya* in the form of these two conceptions, time and place. Every thought must involve a past and future time (because each thought is formed in a moment of time, and each moment of time is merely a change from past to future) and must also involve an attention to a second or third person. On the other hand, if one tries to form a thought of either the present time or the first person (that is, if one attends to either of these), all thoughts will cease – because the present out of the three times and the first person out of the three places are the root-conceptions, and the important characteristic of these two root conceptions is that they will disappear, losing their existence, if they are sought for by being attended to. Thus, when this primal time (the present) and primal place (the first person) lose their existence, even their source *maya* (which means 'that which does not exist'), itself vanishes, since it has no true existence of its own. This is the state transcending *maya*, and hence the ever-existing, one, whole and unlimited Self alone then shines!

without paying attention to any time even one moment before or after this, if we try to know what that one moment is that exists now, then even one millionth of the so-called present moment will be found to be either past or future. If even such subtlest past and future moments are also not attended to and if we try to know what is in between these two, the past and future, we will find that nothing can be found as an exact present. Thus the conception of present time will disappear, being non-existent, and the Self-existence which transcends time and place alone will then survive.

> "The past and future can exist only with reference to the present, which is daily experienced; they too, while occurring, were and will be the present. Therefore, (among the three times) the present alone exists. Trying to know the past and future without knowing the truth of the present (i.e. its non-existence) is like trying to count without (knowing the value of the unit) one !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 16

> "When scrutinized, we – the ever-known existing Thing – alone are; then where is time and where is piece? If we are (mistaken to be) the body, we shall be involved in time and place; but, are we the body? Since we are the One, now, then and ever, that One in space, here, there and everywhere, we – the timeless and spaceless Self -alone are !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu'*, verse 18

Hence, attending to the first place (the first person) among the three places or attending to the present time among the three times is the only path to liberation. Even

this, the path of Sri Ramana is not really for the removal of bondage or for the attainment of liberation! The path of Sri Ramana is paved solely for the purpose of our ever abiding in our eternal state of pure bliss, by giving up even the thought of liberation through the dawn of the right knowledge that we have never been in bondage.

> "Only the first place or the present time is advised to be attended to. If you keenly do so, you will enjoy the bliss of Self, having completed all *yogas* and having achieved the supreme accomplishment. Know and feast on it!"
>
> *'Sadhanai Saram'*

Let us now again take up our original point. When the attention of an aspirant is turned towards second and third persons, the 'I'-consciousness spreads from the brain all over the body through the nerves *(nadis)* in the form of the power of spreading; but when the same attention is focused on the first person, since it is used in an opposite direction, the 'I' -consciousness, instead of functioning in the form of the power of spreading, takes the form of the power of Self-attention (that is, the power of 'doing' is transformed into the power of 'being'). **This is what is called 'the churning of the nadis'** *(nadi-mathana)*. By the churning thus taking place in the *nadis,* the 'I'-consciousness scattered throughout the *nadis* turns back, withdraws and collects in the brain, the starting point of its spreading, and from there it reaches, drowns and is established in the Heart, the pure consciousness, the source of its rising.

In *raja-yoga,* the 'I'-consciousness pervading all the *nadis* is forcibly pushed back to the starting point of its spreading by the power generated through the pressure of breath-retention *(prana-kumbhaka)*. But this is a violent

method. The following is what Sri Bhagavan used to say: "Forcibly pushing back the 'I' – consciousness by breath-retention, as is done in *raja yoga,* is a violent method, like chasing a run-away cow, beating it, catching hold of it, dragging it forcibly to the shed and finally tying it there; on the other hand, bringing back the 'I'-consciousness to its source by enquiry is a gentle and peaceful method, like tempting the cow by showing it a handful of green grass, cajoling and fondling it, making it follow us of its own accord to the shed and finally tying it there". This is a safe and pleasant path, To bear the churning of the *nadis* effected through the method of breath-retention in *raja yoga,* the body must be young and strong. If such a churning is made to happen in a body which is weak or old, since the body does not have the strength to bear it, many troubles may occur such as nervous disorders, physical diseases, insanity and so on. But there is no room for any such dangers if the churning is made to take place through enquiry.

> "To say, 'By holding the attention on Self, the consciousness and by practising abiding in it, he became insane', is just like saying, 'By drinking the nectar of immortality, he died'."
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'*, verse 746

In the path of enquiry, withdrawal from the *nadis* takes place without any strain and as peacefully as the incoming of sleep. The rule found in. some sastras that the goal should be reached before the age of thirty is therefore applicable only in the path of *raja yoga,* and not in enquiry?[79], the path of Sri Ramana !

The channel through which the 'I'-consciousness, which has risen from the Heart and has spread all over the

body, is experienced while it is being withdrawn is called the sushumna nadi. Not taking into consideration the legs and arms, since they are only subsidiary limbs, **the channel through which the 'I' -consciousness is experienced** in the trunk of the body from the base of the spine *(muladhara)* to the top of the head *(sahasrara)* **is alone the sushumna.**

While the 'I' – consciousness is withdrawing through the *sushumna,* an aspirant may have experiences of the places of the six yogic centres *(shadchakras)* on the way, or even without having them may reach the Heart directly. While travelling in a train to Delhi, It is not necessary that a man should see the stations and scenes on the way. Can he not reach Delhi unmindful of them, sleeping happily? However, due to the past devotional tendencies towards the different names and forms of God, which are bound by time and place, some aspirants may have experiences of the six yogic centres and of divine visions, sounds and so on therein. But for those who do not have such obstacles in the form of tendencies, the journey will be pleasant and without any distinguishing feature *(visesha).* In the former case, these experiences are due to non-vigilance *(pramada)* in Self-attention, for they are nothing but a second person attention taking place there! This itself betrays that the attention to Self is lost! For those tremendously earnest aspirants who do not at all give room to non-vigilance in Self-attention, these objective experiences will never occur! The following replies of Sri Ramakrishna are worth being noted in this context: When Swami Vivekananda reported to Him, "All say that they have had visions, but I have not seen any !" the Guru said, "That is good !" On another occasion, when Swami Vivekananda reported that some occult powers *(siddhis)* such as clairvoyance seemed to have been gained by him in the course of his *sadhana,* his Guru

warned him "Stop your *sadhana* for some time, Let them leave you!" It is therefore clear from this that such experiences can be had only by those who delay by often stopping on the way on account of their Self-attention being obstructed by lack of vigilance *(pramada).*

Even though the 'I'-consciousness while being withdrawn courses only along the *sushumna nadi,* on account of its extreme brilliance it illumines the five sense organs *(jnanendriyas),* which are near the *sushumna,* and hence the above–mentioned experiences happen. How? When the light of 'I'-consciousness stationed in the *sushumna* illumines the eye, the organ of sight, there will be visions of Gods and many celestial worlds; when it illumines the ear, the organ of hearing, celestial sounds will be heard such as the playing of divine instruments *(deva dundubhi),* the ringing of divine bells, *Omkara* and so on; when it illumines the organ of smell, delightful divine fragrances will be smelt; when it illumines the organ of taste, delicious celestial nectar will be tasted; and when it illumines the organ of touch, a feeling of extreme pleasure will permeate the entire body or a feeling of floating in an ocean of pleasantness will be experienced. There is no wonder that these experiences appear to be clearer and of greater reality than the sense-experiences in the ordinary waking state, because the experiences of the present waking world are gained through the gross five senses, which are functioning by the impure 'I' – consciousness scattered all over the body, whereas these experiences of celestial worlds are gained through the subtle five senses, which are functioning by the pure, focused 'I' – consciousness. **Yet all these are only qualified mental experiences** *(visesha-mana-anubhavas)* **and not the unqualified Self-experience** *(nirvisesha-ekatma-anubhava).*

Since the mind is now very subtle and brilliant because it is withdrawn from all the other *nadis* into the *sushumna,* and since it is extremely pure because it is free from worldly desires, it is now able to project through the subtle five senses only the past auspicious tendencies *(purva subha vasanas)* as described above. However, just because of these visions and the like, one should not conclude that the mind has been transformed into Self *(atman)*. Even now there has not been destruction of the mind *(mono-nasa)*. Being still alive with auspicious tendencies, it creates and perceives subtler and more lustrous second and third person objects, and finds enjoyment in them. **So this is not at all the unqualified experience of true knowledge *(nirvisesha-jnana-anubhava)*, which is the destruction of the** tendencies *(vasanakshaya)*. Whatever appears and is experienced is only a second person knowledge, which means that *sadhana,* **the first person attention,** is lost at that time! Many are those who take these qualified experiences *(visesha-anubhavas)* of taste, light, sound and so on to be the final attainment of Self-knowledge *(brahma-jnana)*, and because they have had these experiences they think that they have attained liberation and they become more and more entangled in attention to second and third persons, thus losing their foothold on Self-attention. Such aspirants are called 'those fallen from yoga' *(yoga-bhrashtas)*. This is similar to a man bound for Delhi getting down from the train at some intermediate station, thinking 'Verily, this is Delhi', being deluded by its attractive grandeur! Even ***siddhis,*** the superhuman powers that may come during the course of ***sadhana*** are only our **illusion,** barring our progress to liberation and landing us in some unknown place.

What are we to do to escape from falling into such dangers? Even in this difficult situation, the clue given by Bhagavan Sri Ramana alone serves as the proper medicine! How? Whenever one is overtaken by such qualified experiences, the weapon of Ramana *(Ramanastram)*, 'To whom are these experiences ?', is to be used! The feeling 'To me' will be the response! From this, by the enquiry 'Who am I?', one can immediately regain the thread of Self-attention. When Self-attention is thus regained, those qualified experiences of second and third persons will disappear of their own accord because there is no one to attend to them (just as a spirit possessing a man jumps and dances more and more so long as others attend to and try to hold the man, but leaves him if there is nobody to attend to him). **When the mind, giving up knowing** those qualified **external sense-objects**, again turns towards **its form of light**[80] (consciousness), it will sink into its source, the Heart, and lose its form for ever. Therefore, the enquiry 'Who am I?' alone is the best *sadhana* even for aspirants on the path of *raja* yoga), which will guard and guide us to the end and save us. It is the **invincible supreme weapon** *(brahmastram)* which is bestowed only by the Grace of Sri Ramana Sadguru! It is the beacon-light which safeguards us lest we should stray away from the path to eternal happiness, which is the aim of the whole world! It is **the path of Sri Ramana**, which alone transforms us into Self, 'I am that I am'!

During the course of *sadhana*, an aspirant will now be able, by the strength of practice, to cognize tangibly what is the state of the absorption of the ego and what exactly is

80 'When the mind, giving up knowing external sense-object, knows its form of light' (veli *vidayangalai vittu manam tan oliyuru ordale*): refer to '*Upadesa Undhiyar*', verse 16.

Self-consciousness, at which he has been aiming till now. Although his pure Self-existence, devoid of body-consciousness or any other adjunct, will often be experienced by him, this is still the stage of practice and not the final attainment! Why? Since there are still the two alternating feelings, one of being sometimes extroverted and the other of being sometimes introverted, and since there is the feeling of making effort to become introverted and of losing such effort while becoming extroverted, this stage is said to be 'not the final attainment', What Sri Bhagavan reveals in this connection is : "If the mind (the attention) is thus well fixed in *sadhana* (attending to Self), a power of divine Grace will then rise from within of its own accord and, Subjugating the mind, will take it to the Heart". What is this power of divine Grace ? It is nothing but **the perfect clarity of our existence the form of the** Supreme Self *(paramatman)*, ever shining with abundant Grace in the heart as 'I-I' !

The nature of a needle lying within a magnetic field is to be attracted and pulled only when its rust has been removed. But we should not conclude from this that the magnetic power comes into existence only after the rust is removed from the needle. Is not the magnetic power always naturally existing in that field? Although the needle was all the while lying in the magnetic field, it is affected by the attraction of the magnet only to the extent that it loses its rust. All that we try to do by way of giving up second and third attention and clinging to Self-attention is similar to scraping off the rust. So the result of all our endeavours is to make ourself it to become a prey to the attraction of the magnetic field of pure consciousness the Heart, which is ever shining engulfing all (that is reducing the whole

universe to non-existence) **with spreading rays**[81] of Self-effulgence. Mature aspirants will willingly and without rebelling submit themselves to this magnetic power of the Grace of Self-effulgence. Others, on the other hand, will become extroverted (that is, will turn their attention outwards) fearing the attraction of this power. Therefore, we should first make ourself fit by the intense love *(bhakthi)* to know Self and by the tremendous detachment *(vairagya)* of having no desire to attend to any second or third person. Then, since our very individuality (as an aspirant) itself is devoured by that power, even the so-called 'effort of ours' becomes nil. Thus, when the 'I' – consciousness that was spread all over the body is made to sink into the Heart, the real waking, the dawn of knowledge *(jnana)*, takes place. This happens in a split second !

> "Death is a matter of a split second! The leaving off of sleep is a matter of a split second! Likewise, the removal of the delusion 'I am an individual soul *(jiva)*' is also a matter of a split second! The dawn of true knowledge is not such that glimpses of it will be gained once and then lost! If an aspirant feels that it appears and disappears, it is only the stage of practice *(sadhana)*; he cannot be said to have attained true knowledge *(jnana)*. The perfect dawn of knowledge is a happening of a split second; its attainment is not a prolonged process. All the agelong practices are meant only for attaining maturity. Let us give an example it takes a long lime to prepare a temple cannon-blast, first putting the gunpowder into the barrel, giving the wick, adding some stones and then ramming it, but when ignited it explodes as a thunder in a

81 'Engulfing all with spreading rays' *(viri kadiral yavum vizhungum)*; refer to '*Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*;, verse 1.

split second. Similarly, after an agelong period of listening and reading *(sravana)*, reflecting *(manana)*, practising *(nidi-dhyasana)* and weeping put in prayer (because of the inability to put what is heard into practice), when the mind is thus perfectly purified, then and then only does the dawn of self-knowledge suddenly break forth in a split second as 'I am that I am'! Since, as soon as this dawn breaks, the space of Self-consciousness is found, through the clear knowledge of the Reality, to be beginningless, natural and eternal, even the effort of attending to Self ceases then! To abide thus, having nothing more to do and nothing further to achieve, is alone the real and supreme state."

'Sadhanai Saram'

That which we are now experiencing as the waking state is not the real waking state. This waking state is also a dream! There is no difference at all between this waking and dream. In both these states, the feeling 'I am' catches hold of a body as 'I am this' and, seeing external objects, involves itself in activities. To awaken as described above from the dream of this waking state is the dawn of knowledge, our real state, or the **real waking.**

In this connection, some raise the following doubt: "If it is said that we have awakened from one dream and have come to another dream, the present waking state, why, after we awaken from this waking state, will even that not be another dream like this? How are we to determine, 'Another awakening is no longer necessary; **this is the real waking**'?" Whatever state it may be which we feel to be waking, **so long as there is an experience of the existence of any second or third persons, which are other than oneself, it is not at**

all the real waking state; it is only a dream! Verify, our real waking (our real state) is that in which our existence alone (not attached to any kind of body) shines unaided and without cognizing anything other than 'we'. **The definition of the correct waking is that state in which there is perfect Self-consciousness and singleness of Self- existence, without the knowledge of the existence of anything apart from Self! From this one can determine the real waking.**

It is this waking that Sri Bhagavan refers to in the following verse:

> "Forgetting Self, mistaking the body for Self, taking innumerable births, and at last knowing Self and being Self is just like waking from a dream of wandering all over the world. Know thus."
>
> *'Ekatma Panchakam'*, verse 1

Just as one place, a big hall, is divided into three chambers when two walls are newly erected in it, so our eternal, non-dual, natural and adjunctless existence-consciousness appears to be three states, namely waking, dream and sleep, when the two imaginary walls of waking and dream, which are due to the two body-adjuncts (the waking body and the dream body), apparently rise in the midst of it on account of tendencies *(vasanas)*. If these two new imaginary risings, waking and dream, are not there, that which remains will be the one state of Self-consciousness alone. It is only for the sake of immature aspirants who think the three states to be real, that the sastras have named our natural, real state, the jnana-waking, as 'the fourth state *(turiya avastha)*. But since the other three states are truly unreal, this state (the fourth) is in fact the only existing state, the first, and so it need not at all be called 'the fourth' *(turiya)*, nor even 'a state' *(avastha)*. It is

therefore 'that which transcends the states' *(avasthatita)*. It is also called that which transcends the fourth' *(turiyatita)*. Hence, *turiyatita* should not be counted as a fifth state. This is clearly said by Sri Bhagavan :

> "It is only for those who experience the waking, dream and sleep states, that the state of wakeful sleep is named *turiya*, a state beyond these. Since that *turiya* alone really exists and since the apparent three states do not exist, *turiya* itself is *turiyatita*. Thus should you bravely understand !"
>
> *'Ulladhu Narpadhu – Anubandha'*, verse 32

> "It is only for those who are not able to immerse and abide firmly in *turiya* (the state of Self), which shine piercing through the dark ignorance of sleep, that the difference between the first three dense states and the fourth and fifth states are (accepted in sastras)."
>
> *'Guru Vachaka Kovai'*, verse 567

When, through the aforesaid Self-attention, we are more and more firmly fixed in our existence-consciousness, the tendencies *(vasanas)* will be destroyed because there is no one to attend to them. Thus, the waking and dream states, which have been apparently created by these imaginary tendencies, will also be destroyed. Then the one state which survives should no more be called by the name 'sleep'-

> "When, the beginningless, impure tendencies, which were the cause for waking and dream, are destroyed, then sleep, which was (considered to be) leading to bad results (that is, to *tama,)* and which was said to be a void and ridiculed as nescience, will be found to be *turiyatita* itself !"
>
> *'Guru Vaehaka Kovai'*, verse 460

Since that which has been experienced till now as sleep by ordinary people was liable to be disturbed and removed by waking and dream, it appeared to be trivial and temporary. That is why it was said on pages 51 to 52 of this book that sleep is a defective state, and in the footnote of the same pages that the real nature of sleep would be explained later in the eighth chapter. Therefore, our natural state, the real waking, alone is the supreme Reality.

Since this real waking is not experienced as a state newly attained, for a Liberated One *(jivanmukta)* the state of liberation does not become a thought! That is, since bondage is unreal for Him, He can have no thought of liberation. Then how can the thought of bondage come to Him? The thought of bondage and liberation can occur only to the ignorant one *(ajnani)*, who thinks that he is bound. Therefore, to remain in this state of Self, having attained tile supreme bliss (the eternal happiness which is, as pointed out in chapter one. the sole aim of all living beings), which is devoid of both bondage and liberation, is truly to be in the service of the Lord in the manner enjoined by Bhagavan Ramana. This alone is our duty. This alone is the path of Sri Ramana.

> "To remain in the state (of Self), having attained the supreme bliss, which is devoid of both bondage end liberation, is truly to be in the service of the Lord."

'Upadesa Undhiyar', verse 29

Sri Ramanarpanamastu

APPENDIX 1

Who am I?

(An English translation of *Nan Yar?)*

Introduction

In the years 1901 to 1902, when Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi was living in Virupaksha cave on the Holy Hill Arunachala, a devotee by name Sri M. Sivaprakasam Pillai was attracted to Him and approached Him with a number of questions. Sri Bhagavan, who was at that time talking very little, not because of any vow but because He had no inclination to talk, answered most of his questions by writing either in the sand, on a slate or on scraps of paper. The teachings which Sri Sivaprakasam Piliai thus received were first published in 1923 in question and answer form under the title *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?). Soon afterwards, Sri Bhagavan Himself rearranged and rewrote these questions and answers in an essay form thus making *Nan Yar?* into a connected and coherent exposition.

In addition to the question and answer version containing twenty-eight questions, which is nowadays published as a separate booklet, there is-another version containing only fourteen questions, which is printed in *Sri Ramana Vijayam* (a Tamil biography of Sri Bhagavan), and an English translation of which is given in *Self-Realisation*. However, it is only the essay version of this work that is included in *Sri Ramana Nutrirattu* (the Tamil collected works of Sri Ramana), and since this version was prepared

by Sri Bhagavan Himself, it is to be considered as the principal, authentic and authoritative version.

The essay version was based largely upon the version containing twenty-eight questions and answers, but while preparing it Sri Bhagavan newly wrote and added some portions (such as the whole of the first paragraph), omitted other portions (such as the answers to questions 4 and 5, the first sentence of the answer to question 6, parts of the answer to question 20, and so on) and modified, expanded and improved other portions (such as the answer to question 27). However, most of the sentences He did not change at all, but simply rearranged the ideas and connected them in a more logical and coherent order.

The first question asked by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai was, *"Nan yar?"* (Who am I?), to which Sri Bhagavan replied, *"Arive nan"*. which means 'knowledge alone is I', 'Knowledge itself is I' or 'Knowledge indeed is I', the, Tamil word *'arivu'* being approximately equivalent to the Sanskrit word *'jnana'* or the English word 'knowledge'. Sivaprakasam Pillai then asked, "What is the nature of (this) knowledge?", and Sri Bhagavan answered, *"Arivin swarupam sat-chit-anandam"* (The nature of this knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss). Except these two answers, the whole of the second paragraph was not part of the replies actually given by Sri Bhagavan. Therefore, when the manuscript of this work was first brought to Him by Sri Manikkam Pillai, the disciple of Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, He asked with wonder, "I did not give this portion, how did it find place here ?"*. "When Sivaprakasam Pillai was copying

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* Since the nature of Sri Bhagavan is to avoid using the obscure terminology of the scriptures *(sastras)* and thereby confusing the reader, He would not have liked to mention all the scriptural classifications of the, non-Self given in this portion.

Bhagavan's answers in his notebook, he added this portion thinking it would help him to understand that first answer more clearly", explained Manikkam Pillai. "Oh yes, he was already familiar with the scriptural teaching *'neti, neti'*, and for that reason he would have thought so", remarked Sri Bhagavan. Later, while preparing the essay version, Sri Bhagavan did not, however, omit this added portion, but simply marked His own answers in bold type.

Among all the prose works of Sri Bhagavan, *Nan Yar?* holds a place of undisputed and unequalled prominence. Indeed, it may be regarded as the very corner-stone of Sri Bhagavan's teachings, for within these twenty brief paragraphs all His basic teachings are summarized in a clear and undiluted fashion. Therefore, on account of the importance of this work for which we owe a great debt of gratitude to Sri Sivaprakasam PIllal*, an English translation of it is given here.

While preparing this translation, an attempt has been made to make it as precise and as faithful to the original Tamil as possible, even if at times this had to be at the expense of an elegant style of English. The division of the text into paragraphs and sentences, and the order of the sentences, corresponds exactly to the original, and as far as possible the structure of each sentence is of the same form as that in the original. All the portions which are printed in bold in the original are also in bold in this translation, while other key sentences which are not in bold in Tamil have

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* The reader may be interested to hear the following incident, which indicates that this sincere and whole-hearted disciple attained the goal for which he so earnestly sought. When, in 1948, a telegram was brought to Sri Bhagavan conveying the news of the passing away of Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai, He remarked, *"Sivaprakasam siva-prakasamanar"*, which means 'Sivaprakasam has become *Siva-prakasam* the light of Siva !'

here been printed in italics. In the whole of the original text, only one word is within brackets, namely, in the fourth paragraph, the word 'shines' *(prakasikkum)* after the words 'Self appears'. All other portions which are within brackets in this translation have been included either to indicate the exact Tamil or Sanskrit word used in the original, or to make the meaning of the text more clear, or to complete the sense of a sentence which, when literally translated, does not form a complete or distinctly intelligible sentence in English. The footnotes have similarly been added in the translation and none of them are in the original. While translating, all the other existing translations of this work have also been closely compared in order that none of their good points (such as appropriate words, formations of sentences, and so on) should be missed in this translation.

TEXT

Since all living beings *(jivas)* desire to be happy always without any misery, since in everyone supreme love *(parama priyam)* exists only for oneself, and since happiness alone is the cause of love, in order to obtain that happiness, which is one's very nature and which is experienced daily in deep sleep, where there is no mind, it is necessary for one to know oneself. For that, enquiry *(jnana vichara)* in the form 'Who am I?' alone is the principal means *(mukhya sadhana)*.

Who am I? The gross body, which is composed of the, seven *dhatus* (chyle, blood, flesh, fat, marrow, bone and semen), are not 'I'. The five sense-organs *(jnanendriyas)*, namely the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose, which individually and respectively know the five sense-know ledges *(vishayas)*, namely sound, touch, sight, taste and smell, are not 'I', The five organs of action *(karmendriyas)*,

namely the mouth, legs, hands, anus end genitals, the functions of which are (respectively) speaking, walking, giving, excreting and enjoying, are not 'I'. The five vital airs such as *prana,* which perform the five vital functions such as respiration, are not 'I'. Even the mind, which thinks, is not 'I'. Even the ignorance (of deep sleep), in which only the latent tendencies towards sense-knowledges *(vishaya-vasanas)* remain and which is devoid of all sense knowledges and all actions, is not 'I'. After negating as 'not I, not I' all that is, mentioned above, the **knowledge** which remains alone, itself is 'I'. **The nature of (this) knowledge is existence-consciousness-bliss** *(sat-chit-ananda),*

If the mind, which is the cause (and base) of all knowledge (all objective knowledge) and all action, subsides, the perception of the world *(jagat-drishti)* will cease. Just as the knowledge of the rope, which is the base, will not be obtained unless the knowledge of the snake, the superimposition, goes, so the realization of Self *(swarupa-darsanam),* which is the base, will not be obtained unless the perception of the world *(jagat--drishti)* which is a superimposition, ceases.

What is called mind *(manam)* is a wondrous power existing in Self *(atma-swarupam).* It projects all thoughts. If we set aside all thoughts and see, there will be no such thing as mind remaining separate; therefore, thought itself is the nature (or form) of the mind. Other than thoughts, there is no such thing as the world. In deep sleep there are no thoughts, (and hence) there is no world; in waking and dream there are thoughts, (and hence) there is the world also, Just as the spider spins out the thread from within itself and again withdraws it into itself, so the mind projects the world from within itself and again absorbs it into itself.

When the mind comes out (rises) from Self, the world appears. Therefore, when the world appears, Self will not appear; and when Self appears (shines), the world will not appear, If one goes on scrutinizing the nature of the mind, it will finally be found that 'oneself alone is (what is now mistaken to be) the mind. What is (here) called 'oneself' *(tan)* is verily Self *(atma-swarupam)*. The mind can exist only by always depending upon something gross (that is, only by always identifying a gross name-and-form , a body, as 'I'); by itself it cannot stand. It is the mind alone that is called the – subtle body *(sukshma sarira)* or soul *(jiva)*.

That which rises in this body as 'I' ('I am this body') is the mind. If one enquires 'In which place in the body does the thought 'I' rise first?', it will be known to be in the heart *(hridayam)**. That is the source (literally, birth-place) of the mind. *Even if one incessantly thinks 'I,I', it will lead to that place* (our true state, Self). Of all the thoughts that rise in the mind, **the thought 'I'** (the feeling 'I am the body') **is the first thought,** it is only after the rising of this that all

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* As a general rule, whenever Sri Bhagavan uses the word 'place' (idam), He is referring to our true state, Self, rather than to any place limited by time and space. This is confirmed in the next paragraph of this work, where He says, "The place *(idam)* where even the slightest trace of the thought 'I' does not exist, alone is *Self (swarupam)*". Therefore, when He says in this sentence, "If one enquires 'in which place (idam). In the body..", what He in fact expects us to do is to enquire 'From what?', in which case the answer will not be a place in the body, but only 'we', Self, the truly-existing Thing (refer to pages 134 to 135 of this book). Hence, as Sri Bhagavan Himself often explained, the true Import of the word 'heart' *(hridayam)* is not a limited place in the body, but only the unlimited Self (refer to *Upadesa Manjari,* chapter two answer to question 9). However, since the mind or ego can rise only by identifying I body as 'I', a place for its rising can also be pointed out in the body, 'two digits to the right from the centre of the chest', though of course such a place can never be the absolute reality.

other thoughts rise. It is only after the rising of the first person (the subject, 'I', whose form is the feeling 'I am this body' or 'I am so-and-so') that the second and third persons (the objects, 'you', 'Fie', 'she', 'it', 'this', 'that' and so on) appear; without the first person, the second and third persons will not exist.

The mind will subside only by means of the enquiry Who am I?'. The thought 'Who am I?' (which is but a means for turning our attention Selfwards), destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally be destroyed like the stick used for stirring the funeral pyre. It other thoughts rise (thereby indicating that Self-attention is lost), one should, without attempting to complete them, enquire 'To whom did they rise?'. What does it matter however many thoughts rise? (The means to set aside thought-attention and regain Self-attention is as follows:) At the very moment that each thought rises, if one vigilantly enquires 'To whom did this rise?', it will be known 'To me'. If one then enquires 'Who am I?', the mind (our power of attention) will turn back (from the thought) to its source (Self), (then, since no one is there to attend to it) the thought which had risen will also subside. *By repeatedly practising thus, the power of the mind to abide in its source increases.* When the mind (the attention), which is subtle, goes out through the brain and sense-organs (which are gross), the names-and-forms (the objects of the world), which are gross, appear; when it abides in the heart (its source, Self), the names-and-forms disappear. Keeping the mind in the heart (through the above-described means of fixing our attention in Self), not allowing it to go out, alone is called 'Selfwardness' *(ahamukham)* or 'introversion' *(antarmukham)*. Allowing it to go out from the heart alone is called 'extroversion' *(bahirmukham)*. When the mind thus abides in the heart,

the 'I' (the thought 'I', the ego), which is the root of all thoughts, having vanished, the ever-existing Self alone will shine. The place (or state) where even the slightest trace of the thought 'I' does not exist, alone is Self (swarupam). That alone is called 'Silence' *(maunam)*. To be still *(summa iruppadu)* in this manner alone is called 'seeing through (the eye of) knowledge' *(jnana-drishti)*. To be still is to make the mind subside in Self (through Self-attention). Other than this, knowing the thoughts of others, knowing the three times (past, present and future), knowing events in distant places – all these can never be *jnana-drishti.*

What really exists is Self *(atma-swarupam)* alone. The world, soul and God are superimpositions in it like the sliver in the mother-of-pearl; these three appear simultaneously and disappear simultaneously. Self itself is the world: Self itself is 'I' (the soul); Self itself is God; all is the Supreme Self *(siva-swarupam)* .

To make the mind subside, there is no adequate means other than enquiry (vichara). *If controlled by other means, the mind will remain as if subsided, but will rise again.* Even by breath control *(pranayama)* the mind will subside; however, the mind will remain subsided only so long as the breath *(prana)* remains subsided, and when the *prana* comes out the mind will also come out and wander under the sway of tendencies *(vasanas)*. The source of the mind and of the *prana* is one and the same. Thought itself is the nature of the mind. The thought 'I' is indeed the first thought of the mind; that itself is the ego *(ahankara)*. From where the ego originates, from there alone the breath also rises. Therefore, when the mind subsides the *prana* will also subside, and when the *prana* subsides the mind will also subside. But in deep sleep *(sushupti)*, although the mind

subsides, the *prana* does not subside. It is arranged thus by God's plan for the protection of the body and so that others may not mistake the body to be dead. When the mind subsides in the waking state and in Self-absorption *(samadhi)*, the *prana* subsides. The *prana* is the gross form of the mind. Till the time of death, the mind keeps the *prana* in the body, and when the body dies, the mind forcibly carries away the *prana*. Therefore, *pranayama* is a mere aid for controlling the mind, but will not bring about the destruction of the mind *(mano-nasa)**.

Just like *pranayama*, meditation upon a form of God *(murti-dhyana)*, repetition of sacred words *(mantra-japa)* and regulation of diet *(ahara-niyama)* are mere aids for controlling the mind (but will never by themselves bring about its destruction). Through *murti-dhyana* and through *mantra-japa*, the mind gains one-pointedness *(ekagram)*. Just as when a chain is given to an elephant to hold in its trunk, which is always wandering (here and there trying to catch hold of things), that elephant will go along holding only the chain instead of trying to catch any other thing, so also when the mind, which is always wandering, is trained to hold on to anyone name or form (of God), it will cling only to that. Because the mind branches out into innumerable thoughts, each thought becomes very weak. As thoughts subside more and more, one-pointedness is gained, and for the mind which has thereby gained strength, Self-enquiry

* Since the mind is able to carry away the *prana* forcibly at the time of death, we have to understand that the *prana* is less powerful than the mind. That is why Sri Bhagavan says that *pranayama* is merely an aid for controlling the mind, but that it cannot bring about the destruction of the mind. If, on the other hand, the mind is controlled (made to subside) through Self-enquiry *(atma-vichara)* and right knowledge *(jnana)*, that alone will be sufficient, and we need not then bother about controlling the *prana*.

(atma-vichara) will easily be attained*. Through *mita sattvika ahara-niyama***, which is the best of all regulations, the *sattvic* quality of the mind, having been increased, becomes an aid to Self-enquiry.

Although tendencies towards sense-objects *(vishaya--vasanas)*, which have been recurring down the ages, rise in countless numbers like the waves of the ocean, they will all perish as Self-attention *(swarupa-dhyana)* becomes more and more intense. Without giving room even to the doubting thought, 'Is it possible to destroy all these tendencies *(vasanas)* and to remain as Self alone ?', one should persistently cling fast to Self-attention, However great a sinner one may be, it, not lamenting Oh, I am a sinner ! How can I attain salvation ?' but completely giving up even the thought that one is, a sinner, one is steadfast in Self-attention, one will surely be saved@.

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* The reader may here refer to pages 90 to 93, where it is explained precisely in which manner the practice of *japa* or *dhyana* may be an aid, making it easy to attain Self-abidance, which is Self-enquiry. In this context, we would also do well to remember the following instruction of Sri Bhagavan: "One should not use the name (or form) of God mechanically and superficially, without the feeling of devotion *(bhakti)*. To use the name of God, one must call upon Him with yearning and unreservedly surrender oneself to Him" *(Maharshi's, Gospel,* Book One, chapter four). Refer also to appendix one (d).

** *Mita satvika ahara-niyama* means regulating one's diet by taking only moderate quantities of food *(mita ahara)* and by strictly avoiding *non-sattvic* foods, that is, all non-vegetarian foods such as eggs, fish and meat, oil intoxicants such as alcohol and tobacco, excessively pungent, sour and salty tastes, excess onions and garlics, and so on. Furthermore, the Sanskrit word *'ahara'* means 'that which is taken in', so in a broader sense *ahara-niyama* means not only regulation of diet, but also regulation of all that is taken in by the mind through the five senses.

@ The Tamil word used here is *'uruppaduvan'*, which in an ordinary sense means 'will be properly shaped', 'will be reformed' *or* 'will succeed in one's endeavour', but which in a deeper sense means 'will attain Self' (uru= Self or *swarupa;* paduvan=will attain or will be established in).

As long as there are tendencies towards sense-objects *(vishaya-vasanas)* in the mind, so long the enquiry 'Who am I?' is necessary. As and when thoughts rise, one should annihilate all of them through enquiry then and there in their very place of origin. Not attending to what-is-other *(anya,* that is, to any second or third person object) is non-attachment *(vairagya) or* desirelessness *(nirasa);* not leaving Self is knowledge *(jnana).* In truth, these two (desirelessness and knowledge) are one and the same. Just as a pearl-diver, tying a stone to his waist, dives into the sea and takes the pearl lying at the bottom, so everyone, diving deep within himself with non-attachment *(vairagya),* can attain the pearl of Self. If one resorts uninterruptedly to Self-remembrance *(swarupa-smaranai,* that is, remembrance of or attention to the mere feeling 'I') until one attains Self, that alone will be sufficient. As long as there are enemies within the fort, they will continue to come out. If one continues to cut all of them down as and when they come, the fort will fall into our hands.

God and Guru are in truth not different. Just as the prey that has fallen into the jaws of a tiger cannot escape, so those who have come under the glance of the Guru's Grace will surely be saved and will never be forsaken; yet, one should follow without fail the path shown by the Guru.

Remaining firmly in Self-abidance (atma-nishtha), *without giving even the least room to the rising of any thought other than the thought of Self* (atma-chintanai)*,

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* 'The thought of Self' *(atma-chin'anai)* means only Self-attention. Though Sri Bhagavan here uses the word 'thought' *(chintanai)* to denote Self-attention, it is to be understood that Self-attention is not a mental activity, Attending to Self is nothing but abiding as Self, and hence it is not. 'doing' but 'being', that Is, it is not a mental activity but our natural state of mere existence, Refer to the first benedictory

is surrendering oneself to God. However much burden we throw on God, He bears all of it. Since the one Supreme Ruling Power *(parameswara sakti)* is performing all activities, why should we, instead of yielding ourself to it, constantly think. 'I should act in this way; I should act in that way'? When we know that the train is bearing all the burdens, why should we who travel in it, instead of placing even our small luggage in it and being happily at ease, suffer by bearing it (our luggage) on our own head?

What is called happiness *(sukham)* is but the nature of Self; happiness and Self are not different. Self-happiness *(atma-sukham)* alone exists; that alone is real. There is no happiness at all in even a single one of the things of the world. We think that we derive happiness from them on account of our wrong discrimination *(aviveka)*. When the mind comes out, it experiences misery *(duhkham)*. In truth, whenever our thoughts desires) are fulfilled, the mind, turning back to its source- (Self), experiences Self-happiness alone. Similarly, during the time of sleep, Self-absorption *(samadhi)* and swoon, and when the things that we like are obtained and when evil befalls the things that we dislike, the mind becomes introverted and experiences Self-happiness alone. In this way the mind wanders without rest, going out leaving Self, and (then again) returning within. Under the tree, the shade is delightful. Outside, the sun's heat is scorching. A person who is wandering outside reaches the shade and is cooled. After a while he starts out, but, unable to bear the scorching of the heat, comes again under the tree. In this way, he is engaged in going from the shade into the hot sunshine, and coming back from the hot

verse of *Ulladhu Narpadhu* (quoted on page 115 of this book), in which Sri Bhagavan has revealed that the correct way to 'think of' (meditate upon) Self is to abide in Self as Self.

sunshine into the shade. He who acts in this manner is a person lacking discrimination *(aviveki)*. But a person of discrimination *(vivki)* will never leave the shade. Similarly, the mind of the Sage *(jnana)* never leaves *Brahman* (that is, Self). But the mind of the ignorant one *(ajnani)* is such that wandering in the world it suffers; and turning back to *Brahman* for a while enjoys happiness. What is called the world is nothing but thought. When the world disappears, that is, when there is no thought, the mind experiences bliss *(ananda)*; when the world appears. it experiences misery.

Just as in the mere presence of the sun, which rises without desire *(ichcha)*, intention *(sankalpa)* or effort *(yatnam)*, the sun-stone (the magnifying lens) emits fire, the lotus blossoms, water evaporates and people begin, perform and stop their work, and just as in front of a magnet the needle moves, so it is through the mere influence of the presence of God, who is without intention *(sankalpa)*, that the souls *(jivas)*, who are governed by the three divine functions *(muttozhil)* or five divine functions *(panchakrityas)**, perform and stop their activities in accordance with their respective *karmas* (that is, in accordance not only with their *prarabdha karma* or destiny, but also with their *purva karma-vasanas* or former tendencies towards action). Nevertheless, He (God) is not one who has intention *(sankalpo)*. Not even a single action *(karma)* will affect (literally, touch) Him. That is like the actions in the world not affecting the sun, and like the good and bad qualities of the other four elements (namely earth,

* According to the different classifications given in scriptures, the divine functions are said to be three, namely creation *(sristhi)*, sustenance *(sthiti)* and destruction *(samhara)*, or five, namely these three plus veiling *(tirodhana)* and Grace *(anugraha)*.

water, air and fire) not affecting the all-pervading space (the fifth element).

Since it is said in all the scriptures that in order to attain liberation *(mukti)* one should control** the mind, after coming to know that mind-control *(mano-nigraha)* alone is the final decision (injunction) of the scriptures, to read scriptures unlimitedly is fruitless, In order to control the mind, it is necessary to enquire who one is, (then) how, instead (of enquiring thus within oneself) to enquire (and know who one is) in scriptures? One should know oneself through one's own eye of knowledge *(jnana-kan)*. For Rama to know himself to be Rama, is a mirror necessary? 'Oneself'* is within the five sheaths *(pancho kosas)*; whereas the scriptures are outside them. Therefore, enquiring in scriptures about oneself, who is to be enquired into (attended to) setting aside even the five sheaths, is futile,

** The Tamil word used here by Sri Bhagavan for 'control' is *'adakku'*, which literally means 'make subside' or 'make cease from activity', Such control *(adakkam)* or subsidence *(odukkam)* may be either temporary *(mano-laya* or temporary subsidence of mind) or permanent *(mano-nasa* or complete destruction of mind), as said by, Sri Bhagavan in verse 13 of *Upadesa Undhiyar*, In this context, however, the word 'control' *(adakku)* means only 'destroy', for Sri Bhagavan has revealed in verse 40 of *Ulladhu Narpadhu* that destruction of the ego (or mind) alone is liberation.

* In this context, the word 'oneself' *(tan)* denotes the ego, which identifies the five sheaths as 'I' and as '*my* place', rather than Self, which is beyond all limitations such as 'in' and 'out'. Just as Rama does not need a mirror in order to know that the body called 'Rama' is himself, since the feeling 'I am Rama, this *body*' is within that body, so we do not need scriptures to know that we exist, since the feeling of our existence is not within the scriptures but *only* within the five sheaths, which are now felt to be 'I', Therefore, in order to know who we are, we must attend not to the scriptures, which are outside the five sheaths, but *only* to the feeling 'I', which is within the five sheaths. Moreover, since the five sheaths are veiling our true nature, even *they* are to be set aside (left unattended to) when we thus enquire into (attend to) ourself.

Enquiring 'Who am I that am in bondage?' and knowing one's real nature *(swarupam)* alone is liberation *(mukti)*, *Always keeping the mind* (the attention) *fixed in Self* (in the feeling 'I') *alone is called 'Self-enquiry'* (atma-vichara); whereas meditation *(dhyana)* is thinking oneself to be the Absolute *(brahman)*, which is existence-consciousness-bliss *(sat-chit-ananda)*. All that one has learnt will at one time have to be forgotten.

Just as it is fruitless for one to scrutinize the garbage which is to be collectively thrown away, so it is fruitless for one who is to know himself to count the number and scrutinize the properties of the *tattvas* (the principles that constitute world, soul and God) which are veiling oneself, instead of collectively casting all of them aside*, One should consider the universe (one's whole life in this world) to be like a dream.

Except that waking is long and dream is short**, there is no difference (between the two). To the extent to which all the events which happen in walking appear to be real, to that same extent even the events which happen in dream appear at that time to be real. In dream, the mind assumes another body. In both waking and dream, thoughts and

* From the opinion of Sri Bhagavan expressed in this sentence, the reader can now understand why it was said in the first footnote of the introduction (see page 189), "...He would not have liked to mention all the scriptural classifications of the non-Self (the *tattvas* which are veiling our true nature) given in this portion".

** Though Sri Bhagavan here says that waking is long and dream is short, He reveals the actual truth in verse 560 of *Guru vachaka Koval* where He says: "The answer 'Waking is long and dream is short' was given as a mere (formal) *reply* to the questioner. (In truth, however, no such difference exists, because, since time itself is a mental conception,) the conception of differences in time (such as 'long' and 'short') appears to be true only because of the deceitful play of *maya* the mind".

names-and-forms (objects) come into existence simultaneously (and hence there is no difference between these two states).

There are not two minds, a good mind and a bad mind. The mind is only one. Tendencies *(vasanas)* alone are of two kinds, auspicious *(subha)* and inauspicious *(asubha)*. When the mind is under the influence of auspicious tendencies it is called a good mind, and when it is under the influence of inauspicious tendencies, a bad mind. However bad others may appear to be, one should not dislike them. Likes and dislikes are both to be disliked. One should not allow the mind to dwell much upon worldly matters. As far as possible, one should not interfere in the affairs of others. All that one gives to others, one gives only to oneself. If this truth is known, who indeed will not give to others?

If oneself (the ego) rises, all will rise; if oneself subsides, all will subside. To the extent to which we behave humbly, to that extent (and that extent only) will good result. If one can remain controlling the mind (keeping the mind subsided), one can live anywhere.

APPENDIX 2

Atma Vichara Patikam
Yar Jnani?
Sandehi Yarendru Sandehi !
Japa

'The following four poems are translations of some verses from *Sadhanai Saram,* a Tamil work of Sri Sadhu Om.

a) Atma Vichara Patikam

(Eleven Verses on Self-Enquiry)

1. Thinking is a mentation *(vritti)* ; being is not a mentation ! If enquired 'Who thinks ?', thinking will come to an end ! Even when thoughts do not exist, do not you exist? To remain thus in the source of thoughts is the state of Self- abidance *(nishtha) !* Be thus!

2 He who **thinks** is the **individual soul** *(jiva);* he who **is**, is the **Supreme** *(brahman)* ! If the thinker thinks with great love of That which is **still**, this thought, the love to **be**, will become the thought free thought which kills all thinking. When the thinker thus dies with all his thoughts, to remain surviving him is union with the Supreme *(siva-sayujyam) !*

3. He who thinks 'I (am so-and-so)' is himself one among the thoughts. Of all thoughts, the thought 'I (am so-and-so)' is the very first. The *jiva* who thinks 'I (am so-and--so)' is only our reflection. For, we never think 'I (am this or that)' when we shine as That (the Supreme).

4. This thought, 'I (am the body)', does not exist in deep sleep. This thought, 'I (am the body)', does not exist in the true state of *jnana* either. Since it rises and slips away in between (two such states), this 'I' is unreal; hence, this 'I' is only a thought.

5. The waxing of this thought 'I' is indeed the waxing of misery! This thought 'I' alone is what is called the ego. It is only because of non-enquiry that this 'I' has come into existence and is flourishing ! If, instead of being favoured, it is enquired into, 'What is this !?', it will disappear, losing its existence.

6. The second and third persons (the objects) live only because of the root, the first person (the subject or ego). If the fickle mind turns towards the first person, the first person will become non-existent and That which really exists will then shine forth. This indestructible, real Self is *Jnana*.

7. To think of second and third persons is sheer foolishness, for by thinking of second and third persons the mental activities *(mano-vritlis)* will wax. (On the other hand,) attending to the first person is equal to committing suicide, for *only* by enquiring into the first person will the ego itself die.*

8. Attending to second and third persons instead of turning towards and attending to the first person is an attention based only upon ignorance *(ajnana)*. If you ask, "Then is not the attention to the ego also an attention based upon ignorance? So why should we attend to this 'I?', then listen.

*Altarnatively:... will the ego die automatically.

9. The reason why this 'I' dies when enquired into, 'What am I? is as follows: This thought 'I' is a reflected ray of *Jnana* (Self), (and it alone is directly connected with Self, whereas the other thoughts are not); (so) when the attention goes deeper and deeper within along the ray 'I', its length decreases more and more, and when the ray I' dies that which shines as 'I' is *Jnana*.

10. Do not perform any action thinking 'It should be done by me'. Nothing is done by you, (for) you are simply nothing ! By knowing this first, if you avoid the rising of doership, then everything will be done well by Him and your peace will remain undisturbed !

11. When scrutinizing 'What is real?', nothing in the world is (found to be) real; Self alone is real *(satyam)*. Therefore, let us renounce everything and ever remain unshakably as the reality *(sat)*. This alone is the service enjoined upon us by Sri Ramana, our eternal Lord!

b) Yar Jnani? (Who is Jnani?)

1. Is the mind which decides, 'He is a *Jnani*, he is not a *Jnani*', knowledge *(jnana)* or ignorance *(ajnana)"?* The *Jnani* (the knower of Self) is only one! Therefore, even the *Jnani* seen by the ignorant mind, which sees *Jnanis* as more than one, is a product of that ignorant mind.

2. You yourself are a mere thought; therefore he who is considered by you to be a *Mahatma* (a *Jnani)* is nothing but one of your (the thought's) thoughts! How then can such an illusory thought be an *Atma-jnani*, the Supreme? Thus should you understand.

3. To say, "He is great, he is a *Jnani*, I know", is wrong. Even to say. "All are *Jnanis*", is wrong, because seeing

as if many people exist is a sign of ignorance *(ajnana)*. There is only one who exists, and That is you. Thus should you know!

4. There is no ignorant one *(ajnani)* in the view of the *Jnani*. (Likewise, there can never be a *Jnani* in the view of an *ajnani)* The *ajnani* names merely the body of the *Jnani* as a *Jnani!* By seeing the *Jnani* in this way, the *ajnani* becomes one who has seen even the *Jnani* as an *ajnani!*

5. No matter how many *Mahatmas you* visit and no matter even if they exhibit the eightfold occult powers *(ashta slddhis)* know that the true *Mahatma* is only He who turns your attention Selfwards, advising, "Mind not these juggleries, turn within".

6. Let this *atma* (the man) who goes to the Himalaya's and the forests therein in search of *Mahatmas*~ first become a *Sukhatma* (a blissful one) by entering within himself enquiring 'Whence am I?'. Then all the *Mahatmas* who appear before him will be found to be his own *Atma* (Self) ! Thus said, Sri Ramana !

7. To know *Jnanis* before knowing one's Self is in no way possible. Therefore, hold steadfastly to the only worthy effort, that of destroying the feeling 'I am an individual soul *(jiva)*' .

8. Therefore, if the thought again rises in you to know whether someone is a *Jnani* or an *ajnani* immediately reject it and be keen in fixing your attention, through the enquiry 'Who am I?', on the source from which that thought had risen.

9. Give up trying to know whether so-and-so is a *Jnani* or an *ajnani* and enquire 'Who is he who knows that there

is so-and-so ?' The reply will be 'I'. If you further enquire 'Who is this I?' then only will the true *Jnani* appear (as 'I am that I am') !!

10. Let anyone be a *Jnani,* what is it for us? Until and unless we know our Self, it will be of no avail to us. On scrutiny, it will be found that *Jnana* itself is the *Jnani;* He is not a human form, He is verily the supreme Space (of consciousness), and we are That.

11. Therefore, by means of enquiry, destroy the mind which tries to know' This one or' that one is a *Jnani'.* It is therefore proper to know through Silence that the *Jnana* (the consciousness) which never rises as 'I am this or that' itself is the *Jnani !*

c) Sandehi Yarendru Sandehi !

(Doubt the Doubter !)

1. An apt reply to the doubts that have come, or a state in which doubts do not come – which do you prefer? The wise will only recommend becoming pure knowledge *(jnana),* in which there is no room for doubts to rise !

2. Even if the doubt which has once come is cleared by an apt reply, again another will spring forth in your mind. If you like not to have such a nuisance again, enquire within 'Whence does this doubt rise?'

3. Doubts can rise only about the existence of things other than oneself; no doubt can rise about the existence of oneself, If one's existence is mistaken to be the body's existence, then doubts will rise about the world and God (which come into existence only when the wrong, identification 'I am the body' rises); if one's existence is known to be Self, the sale existence, no doubt will rise !

4. Before the doubt 'Am I this body or something else?' is cleared, why should one-raise doubts about other things (such as the world and God)? Know that the only question (doubt) allowed for true aspirants is to enquire within 'Who am I?'.

5. Whatever doubt may rise, it cannot rise without the rising of you – the first to have risen – who raised it. There-fore the primal doubt, namely that of not knowing who you are, is the root of all doubts !

6. Until this primal doubt is cleared, replying to your other doubts will be just like cutting the leaves off the branches of a tree, because they will sprout again and again! But if the root is cut, they will not sprout again!

7. Doubts about the reality of the world and God rise only because of one's defect of not knowing the reality of one-self. When one's reality shines as Self, without another, what doubt can rise?

8. Doubts do not rise during sleep. When sleep ends, someone, as if you, rises from there. This 'you' who is now here (in the waking state) is the doubter. He did not exist in sleep, but you did exist there. Therefore, you (who exist even in sleep) are not the doubter !

9. It is only in the waking and dream states that the doubter exists; he ceases to exist in sleep. Did you who existed then (in sleep) have any doubts? You who exist (even in sleep) are That *(Brahman* or Self).

10. The doubter's existence itself is doubtful; but your existence is the undoubtable, absolute existence! He who rises as 'I am the body' is the doubter; but you are the Space of *Jnana;* what other thing is there for you to know?

11. This is the reason why the Gracious Lord Ramana, *Jnana* incarnate, who took me as His own, replied to many of the questions of His sincere disciples, “Doubt ‘Who is the doubter who asks these questions?’.”

d) Japa

1. One-pointedness is not the only benefit to be gained by doing repetition *(japa)* of the divine name of God. The main benefit is the complete surrender of oneself to God on account of heart-melting and overbrimming love for Him.

2. Remembering once the name of God with an unwavering (one-pointed) mind is more valuable than doing a thousand crores of *Japa* with a wandering mind. To call upon God even once by (mentally or vocally uttering) His name with full-hearted love is more valuable than doing a thousand crores of *japa* with a quiet (one-pointed) mind.

3. While uttering (either mentally or vocally) the name of God, there is one thing which is essential to mix with it, namely ‘love’ If one knows well how to mix love with *japa,* it will bestow not only one-pointedness but even deathlessness!.

4. Uniting love with the name of God is offering oneself completely to Him. How? ‘We’ are love and the ‘name of God’ is He Himself. Thus the principle of self-surrender functions here, on account of which the state of Self is attained !

5. Worthy *japa* can ‘be classified into two categories, namely *jnana japa* and *bhakti japa*. ‘I, I’ (or ‘I am’ or ‘I am is I am’) *is jnana japa,* and *nama-japa* (that is, repetition of the name of God even once) with love is

bhakti japa. One who does *jnana japa* tries to know the true import of the word 'I', while one who does *bhakti japa* melts into love.

6. The mind that attends to the true import of the word 'I' through *jnana japa* dies in Self, losing its individuality. The mind that embraces the name of God, who is pure consciousness *(chit)*, with melting love (through *bhakti japa)* transforms itself into the unbroken form of bliss *(ananda)*; it cannot remain as a separate entity.

7. *Jnana japa* bestows upon that enquirer all the requisite help and guidance. *Bhakti japa* makes the devotee unite with God. Towards whichever one of these two love naturally rises in a person, that one will be fit to be adopted by him.

8. Our divine Master, Atma Ramana, has given us only two paths, namely Self-enquiry (the path of knowledge or *jnana marga)* and self-surrender (the path of love or *bhakti marga)*. Hence, know that, in accordance with these two paths, *japa* is also of two kinds. Follow either of them and attain the goal (Self-abidance, the state of egolessness) !

APPENDIX 3

Sadhana and Work*

The charge made against humanity is that throughout their life all people attend only to second and third persons (the objects such as 'you', 'he', 'she', 'it', 'this', 'that' and so on) and they never turn their attention towards the first person (the subject 'I') in order to find out 'Who am I?'. From the moment of waking till the moment of going to sleep, from birth till death, from creation till dissolution, all people-indeed all living beings-pay attention only to second and third persons. And what is the net result of such attention? Untold heaps of misery!

Knowing that all misery arises only as a result of the fundamental error – the original sin – of attending to second and third persons instead of attending to and knowing the true nature of the first person, Bhagavan Sri Ramana graciously appeared on earth to advise humanity, "Throughout the waking and dream states you attend only to second and third persons, and in consequence you experience endless misery. But in sleep, when you do not attend to any second or third person, you do not experience

* Adapted from a letter which Sri Sadhu Om wrote in reply to a friend who had written asking, "How is it possible in practice to maintain unceasing Self-attention when, in the course of a day, various activities demand some or all of one's attention ?"

any misery. Overlooking the peaceful happiness that you experienced while asleep, you search for happiness in the waking state by attending to innumerable external objects. However, does not the fact that you experienced happiness during sleep in the absence of those objects, indicate that happiness lies not in the objects but in you, the first person or subject? Therefore why not you try, even in the waking state, to attend not to second and third persons but to the first person 'I' ?"

Being the perfect spiritual doctor that He is, Sri Bhagavan has diagnosed the exact cause of our sufferings, and has prescribed the perfect course of treatment – namely taking the medicine of Self-attention and observing the diet-restriction of abstaining from attending to second and third persons.

Those of us who pay heed to this advice of Sri Bhagavan and who therefore desire to follow the course of treatment prescribed by Him, are called *mumukshus* or aspirants for liberation. In order to qualify as an aspirant, one must have the absolute conviction that happiness, the sole aim of all living beings, can be obtained not from external objects but only from one's own inmost Self. When one has this qualification, an intense yearning will arise in one's heart to try to attend to and know Self. Indeed', for a true aspirant the desire and effort to know Self will become the most important part of his life, and all other things will be regarded as being only of secondary importance. When such an intense yearning arises in one, success is assured, for 'where there is a will there is a way'.

On hearing this, however, some devotees wonder whether it is necessary then to withdraw from all activities in order to be able to practise Self-attention. "If we are to

follow this *sadhana* of Self--attention in all earnestness, will not work prove to be an obstacle? But if we give up all work, how are we to provide the food, clothing and shelter required by the body?" they ask. However, whenever devotees asked Sri Bhagavan such questions, He used to reply that work need not be a hindrance to spiritual practice *(sadhana)*. This does not mean, of course, that an aspirant should work in the same spirit as a wordly man or that he should work with the same aim in view. The spirit in which and the aim with which an aspirant should work in this world, can be illustrated by the following example:

Suppose a businessman rents a shop in the heart of a big city for Rs. 1,000/- a month. If from his business he aims to make only sufficient money to pay the rent for the shop, will it not be a worthless business? Should not his aim in renting the shop be to earn a profit of Rs. 10,000/- a month? On the other hand, if he does not make sufficient money even to pay the rent, will he be able to remain in the shop to earn his profit?

Our body is like the shop rented by the businessman. The aim with which we rent this body is to realize Self, while the rent we have to pay for the body is food, clothing and shelter. In order to pay this rent, it is necessary for us to work, using the mind, speech and body as our instruments. If we do not pay the rent, we cannot live in the body and earn the great profit of Self-knowledge. However, we should not spend our whole life-all our time and effort-in working to pay the rent. The mind, speech and body should work only for that amount of time and with that amount of effort which is required for paying the rent – for providing the food, clothing and shelter necessary for the body. If instead we devote all our time and effort towards

accumulating comforts and conveniences for the body, as worldly people do, we would be just like the worthless businessman who works only to pay the rent and who never tries to make a profit. Therefore, a sincere aspirant should arrange his work in such a way that he will spend only a portion of his time and energy for maintaining the body, so that he can utilize the remaining time and energy in striving to earn the great profit of Self-knowledge.

For some aspirants *prarabdha*[1] will be arranged by God or Guru in such a way that they need to do little or no work to maintain their body, whereas for other aspirants it may be arranged in such a way that they have to spend most of their time in working for the maintenance of the body. But in whatever way the *prarabdha* is arranged, it is arranged only for the aspirant's own good, that is, for his ultimate attainment of Self-knowledge. Moreover, since *prarabdha* determines only the outward activities of the body and mind, it can in no way obstruct the inward desire and yearning for Self-knowledge. If one has an intense yearning for Self-knowledge, the Guru's Grace will certainly help one in all ways, both from within and without, to enable one to attend to Self.

Some people complain, however, that throughout their life they are forced to be engaged in so many activities that they have no time to practise Self-attention. But even in the midst of so many other important activities, do we not find time to eat, take bath, answer the calls of nature, sleep and so on? Similarly, in the midst of all other activities, an earnest aspirant will find at least a few minutes each day to practise Self-attention. In the beginning, if possible, at least

1 *prarabdha* is that portion of the fruit of one's past actions or *karmas* which has been ordained by God to be experienced by one in this lifetime.

ten minutes should be devoted morning and evening to practising Self-attention. Such regular daily practice is recommended by Sri Bhagavan in verse 44 of *Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai* (The Bridal Garland of Letters), in which He sings, "'Turning Self wards, daily see thyself with an introverted look and it (the reality) will be known' – thus didst Thou tell me, O my Arunachala". If such regular practice is allowed to go on for some time, Self-attention will become more and more familiar and one will then find that it is possible to divert one's attention from second and third persons to the first person even in the midst of one's daily activities, whenever a few moments of leisure occur between the end of one activity and the beginning of the next one. If one thus tries to turn one's attention towards the first person whenever one has a few moments of leisure, by the end of the day a great deal of time will have been devoted to Self-attention, though intermittently. Such intermittent Self-attention will in turn be found to be of great help to one when one sits for practice at the prescribed time (ten minutes to half-an-hour each morning and evening), when no outside hindrance will be there to obstruct one's practice.

At first one may not be able to maintain unbroken Self-attention even for a few minutes. Due to long habit, it is only natural that the mind will start to think of some second or third person objects. Each time the attention thus turns outwards, the aspirant again tries to turn it back towards the first person. This process of slackening of Self-attention and then trying to regain it, will repeat itself again and again. If the aspirant's mind is weak due to deficiency in the love to know Self, the slackening of Self-attention will happen frequently, in which case a struggle will ensue and the mind will soon become tired. Instead of thus

repeatedly struggling to regain Self-attention, one should relax the mind for a while as soon as the initial attempt to fix the attention on the first person becomes un-steady, and then again make a fresh attempt. If one thus makes *intermittent attempts,* each attempt will be found to have a fresh force and a more precise clarity of attention.

If one presses one's thumb on a pressure scale, the dial may at first indicate a pressure of ten kilograms. But if one tries to maintain that pressure for a long period of time, the dial will show that it is gradually slackening and decreasing. On the other hand, if one releases the pressure and after a brief rest presses again with fresh vigour, the dial will show a little more than ten kilograms. Similar is the case with Self-attention. If one struggles for a long time to maintain Self-attention, the intensity and clarity of one's attention will gradually slacken and decrease. But if instead one relaxes as soon as one finds that one's Self-attention is slackening, and if after a brief rest one makes a fresh attempt to fix one's attention on Self, that fresh attempt will have a greater intensity and clarity. Therefore, what is important is not so much the length of time one spends trying to attend to Self, but the earnestness and intensity with which one makes each fresh attempt.

During the time of practice *(sadhana)* our attention, which is now focused on second and third person objects, has to turn back 180 degrees, so to speak to focus itself on the first person. In the beginning, however, one's attention may be able to turn only 5, 10 or 15 degrees. This is because one's turning is resisted by a powerful spring – the spring of one's tendencies *(vasanas)* or subtle desires towards worldly objects. Every time one tries to turn towards the first person, this spring of one's worldly

tendencies will tend to pull one's mind back again towards second and third persons. Therefore the number of degrees one is able to turn will depend upon the firmness of one's desirelessness *(vairagya)* towards worldly objects and upon the strength of one's longing *(bhakti)* to know Self. Such *vairagya* and *bhakti will be* increased in one by regularly practising Self-attention, by earnestly praying to Sri Bhagavan and by constantly associating with such persons or books as will repeatedly remind one, "Only by knowing Self can we attain. real and enduring happiness; so long as we do not know Self we will be endlessly courting and experiencing misery; therefore our first and foremost duty in life is to know Self; all other efforts will only end in vain."

As one's desirelessness and longing to know Self thus increase by prayer to the Guru, by study *(sravana)* of and reflection *(manana)* upon His teachings, and by practice *(nididhyasana)* of Self-attention, one's ability to turn one's attention towards the first person will also increase, until one will be able to turn it 90, 120 or even 150 degrees at each fresh attempt. When one's ability to turn one's attention Selfwards thus increases, one will be able to experience a tenuous current of Self-awareness even while engaged in activity; that is, one will be able to experience an awareness of one's *being* which will not be disturbed by whatever one's mind, speech or body may be doing, in other words, one will be able to remember the feeling 'I am' which always underlies all one's activities. However, this tenuous current of Self-awareness should not be taken to be the state of unceasing Self-attention,. because one will experience it only when one feels inclined to do so.

How then can one experience the state of unceasing Self-attention, the state of unswerving Self-abidance? The

Guru's Grace will more and more help those aspirants who thus repeatedlY practise Self-attention with great love *(bhaktl)* to know Self. When a glowing fire and a blowing wind join together, they play wonders. Likewise, when the glowing fire of love for Self-knowledge and the blowing wind of the Guru's Grace join together, a great wonder takes place. During one of his fresh attempts, the aspirant will be able to turn his attention a complete 180 degrees towards Self (that is, he will be able to achieve a perfect clarity of Self-awareness, completely uncontaminated by even the least awareness of any second or third person), whereupon he will feel a great change taking place spontaneously and without his effort. His power of attention, which he had previously tried so many times to turn towards Self and which had always slipped back towards second and third persons, will now be caught under the grip of a powerful clutch which **will not allow** it to turn again towards any second or third person. *This clutch is the clutch of Grace.* Though Grace has always been helping and guiding one, it is only when one is thus caught by its clutch that one becomes totally a prey to it. If one once turns one's attention a full 180 degrees towards Self, one is sure to be caught by this clutch of Grace, which will then take one as its own and will forever protect one from again turning towards second and third person objects. This state in which the mind is thus caught by the clutch of Grace and is thereby drowned forever in its source, is known as the experience of true.knowledge *(jnananubhutl)*, Self-realization *(atma-sakshatkaram)*, liberation *(moksha)* and so on. This alone can be called the state of unceasing Self-attention.

Some people doubt, "If it is so, will the mind then remain drowned forever in *samadhi?* Will it not be able to come out again and know all the second and third person

objects of this world? Is it not a fact that even Bhagavan Sri Ramana spent nearly fifty-four years in the state of Self-realization and that most of that time He was seen to be attending to second and third persons ?" Yes, it is true that though Sri Bhagavan always remained in the state of Self-realization, yet in the outlook of others He was seen to be knowing the world. How can this be accounted for?

To remain with the body and mind completely inert is not the only sign of *samadhi*. Though after Self-realization some *Jnanis* spend their entire lifetime completely oblivious of the body and world, not all *Jnanis* will necessarily remain thus. The return of body-consciousness (and consequently world-consciousness) after the attainment of Self-realization is according to the *prarabdha* of that body; in the case of some it might never return, while in the case of others it might return within a second or after a few hours or days. But even in such cases where it does return, it will not be experienced as a knowledge of second or third persons! That is to say, the body and world are not experienced by the *Jnani* as second and third persons – objects other than Himself-but as His own unlimited and undivided Self.

So long as one is an aspirant one mistakes the limited form of one's body to be oneself, and consequently the remaining portion of one's unlimited real Self is experienced by one as the world-a collection of second and third person, objects. But after attaining Self-realization, since one experiences oneself to be the unlimited Whole, one discovers that all the second and third persons which one was previously feeling to be other than oneself, are truly nothing but one's own Self. Therefore, even while a *Jnani* is (in the view of onlookers) attending to second and third

person objects, He is (in His own view) attending only to Self. Hence, even though He may appear to be engaged in so many activities, both physical and mental, He is in fact ever abiding in the natural state of unceasing Self--attention.

Therefore, unceasing Self-attention is possible only in the state of Self-realization and not in the state of practice *(sadhana)*. What one has to do during the period of *sadhana* is to cultivate ever-increasing love to attain Self-knowledge and to make intermittent but repeated attempts to turn one's attention a full 180 degrees towards Self. If one once succeeds in doing this, then unceasing Self-attention will be found to be natural and effortless.

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Tutti questi lavori sono da Sri Sadhu Om e Michael James, già pubblicati in inglese.
I numeri a, b, c, d, e, sono una raccolta di articoli.

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Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi has revealed that perfect and eternal happiness is our real nature, and that the self-enquiry 'Who am I?' is the direct path through which we can attain and enjoy such happiness here and now. He Himself attained Self-knowledge (atma-jnana) while but a sixteen-year-old school boy, and thereafter lived for fifty-four years as the Sadguru of countless people of all countries and all religions. This book, The Path of Sri Ramana–Part One, is a profound, lucid and masterly exposition of the spiritual teachings which He graciously bestowed upon the world!

In this book, unlike in other commentaries upon the teachings of Sri Ramana, the exact method of practising the enquiry 'Who am I?' is analysed and explained in a clear, coherent and scientific manner, taking as authority only the original Tamil works of Sri Bhagavan and not relying merely upon the translations of them or upon the various conversations with Him recorded by devotees in other languages. It is for this reason that this book has been widely acclaimed by sincere devotees of Sri Ramana, including such senior disciples as Sri Natananandar, to be a definitive work on His teachings and a rare treasure of His Grace!

The author of this book, Sri Sadhu Om, was born with a spiritual bent of mind and, having already reached the pinnacle of desirelessness, he came to Sri Ramana Bhagavan in his early youth and took Him as his Sadguru. When Sri Bhagavan instructed him, "Attend to that for which you have come", he looked upon these gracious words as a mahavakya and therefore dedicated himself earnestly and one-pointedly to the practice of Self-enquiry and self-surrender, that is, to being ever inwardly attentive lest the least trace of ego should rise from within. It is because he thus whole-heartedly followed the path of Sri Ramana and thereby became a pure and worthy channel for His Grace to flow through, that Sri Sadhu Om is able to expound the practical teachings of his Sadguru with so much clarity, originality and authority!